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MORE FORGET-ME-NOTS.





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MORE
"FORGET-ME-NOTS
FROM GOD'S GARDEN."

—❖❖❖—
BY F. J. THEOBALD,
Author of "Bob and I," "Heaven Opened," &c.

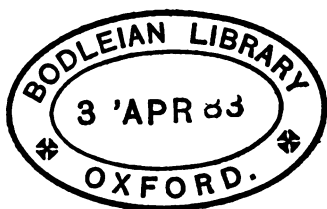
—❖❖❖—
"This is a relation that will beget some wonder, and it well may, for most of our world are at present possessed with an opinion that visions and miracles are ceased."—LIFE OF DR. DONNE.

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MORE "FORGET-ME-NOTS

FROM GOD'S GARDEN."

BY F. J. THEOBALD,
Author of "Bob and I," "Heaven Opened," &c.



CHAPTER I.

MY DIARY.

—
"What do the watchers say?
Is there no glimpse of day?
Levite and Priest, to you we turn in sorrow—
(Now is your hour to reign,
Else were your office vain)—
What of the night, we know. What of the morrow?
Seer, and scribe, and sage,
Ye, who now rule the age,
Have ye no vision wherewithal to save it?
Or, are ye echoes all,
Such as within a hall
Only give back the voices which we gave it?"

AURORA.

CHILDREN are terrible mimics. They begin their histrionic performances before they can toddle, and don the dramatic socks and buskin before Berlin wool is replaced by shoe leather, and when the only boards that they know, are those of the nursery floor. How necessary it is for all who have

anything to do with them to bear this in mind! It would also prove most wholesome discipline for elder people to set such a watch over their own thoughts and actions, so as to give them good models for imitation, and avoid planting any but good seed in their little minds, for we may be sure that every germ thus implanted in early life, will spring up in future years, bearing fruit of some kind, either good or bad, rarely indifferent.

I remember when I, Jenny Greatheart, was a child, my dear father kept a pocket-book diary in which he was accustomed to jot down all sorts of every-day occurrences.

Of course Bob—(*i.e.*, Bob Rivers)—and I did the same. It was only a few days ago that we were looking over some of these childish productions, and laughing at the very serious, and yet spasmodic fashion, in which they were kept: at the ludicrous spelling, the homely phraseology, and marvellous scrawl of the handwriting. Some of the details given provoked great merriment. In my earliest diary, written when I was about eight years old, I find this important entry:—

“May 30th.—bob and me plaid truunt, and was kep in—got lots of flours first.”

Again, soon after: “bob’s wite rabbit dide, we be-rid it in my garden, on the grave ston we rote—

“ ‘Pore bunny died,
bob and me cried.’ ”

"Bob composd the potry."

"Ah, Bob!" I exclaimed, as we read this, "don't you remember how shocked mother was that day, when she overheard us consulting together, as to what text of Scripture to put after the two lines, of what we called poetry?"

"Yes," said Bob, "that I do! and she gave us a very dry hymn to learn, I forget what. It was the next day, I think, as we were playing about in the little parlour, I cut my finger so terribly with the carving knife. Here's a scar now."

"Why, here I have it written down:—'bob cut his finger with mothers calving nife! mother very cros.'"

As weeks and months glide on, the spelling and writing gradually improve. Four years later we found quite a long effusion, headed "My Dream."

Some three weeks after is the entry in very large writing, evidently indicative of great delight: "Went to Hasting, had lots of fun with Bob."

The diary here becomes more and more diffuse; the composition is very jerky and abrupt. Some days are passed over without notice, whereas other days, bringing with them great events, are so overcrowded with narrative, that sundry scraps of paper are attached in a very perplexing fashion, filled with an almost illegible writing.

This is especially the case against the date September 29th, where I give a somewhat incoherent

but still graphic account of our never-to-be-forgotten adventure in the little boat, and providential preservation by means of the good old Jem Sharp.

It is on the 24th of August previously I find written, "Brothers Howler and Smorlbrane to tea. Told mother, father really must be 'read out' from the community if he was not soon converted. Mother cried a great deal." Then in large writing I have added: "N.B.—I'm sure father was born converted, and I said so, but mother scolded me, and said I must not say such wicked things." Then I find another "N.B.," and I remember so well the sort of desperate relief it was for me to write it, and how I scrambled the manuscript away on hearing mother's footstep: "N.B.—Why did God let us be born wicked? Don't believe he did, because father says God loves us all."

Ah me! what strange notions come into the minds of our little ones! What *disjecta membra* of disjointed theologies; what rags of truth torn from the garments they have left behind them in Heaven!

During the month of November, I find against date 25th, "Bob and I had a donkey ride. Bob fell off into a ditch; I helped him out."

Dec. 4th, "I fell into Love-lane pond; Bob pulled me out. Mother very cross."

Dec. 5th, "Had a bad cold. Treacle posset in bed, and had to learn a hymn; very dry one."

Dec. 29th, "Brothers Howler and Smorlbrane to tea. Mother very unhappy."

Jan. 1st, 18—, "Father gave me the life of Jung Stilling. Bob and I went to slide on Love-lane pond, and both fell in because the ice broke."

A long pause comes here, but then against the 8th of February is an important entry.

"Lilly married to Mr. Alfred Rish. Address, Grange Lodge, Chestnut Grove."

Now, considering that Bob and I were continually running in to see and have a game with Lilly in her lovely garden, it was not the least likely we should forget where she lived. But as father put down different addresses, so I thought I must, too; on the subject of the wedding, Bob's diary becomes most diffuse and eloquent. How we did laugh as we read it! "You certainly did spell badly, Bob," I said.

"Yes, Jenny, don't you remember the scores of impositions I had to write out at school because of it? Why, the walls of my little study might have been papered with those awful sheets!"

Here is Bob's version, spelling and all.

Feb. 7, "Such a jolly day, very brite sun and warm to, Lilly and Alf got marid, Jenny and Maggie brids-mades, they had white muslin dresses and flours on there hare, Father and me where groomsmen, twenty to brekfast, and Lilly and Alf went to Paris. Alf is a very good fellow." Once again a few weeks later,

Bob's scrawl appears: "wot a jolly old boy Alf is, nothing like havin a brother with lots of money. He says heel giv me a pony when I can rite him a letter without bad spellin. Lilly and Jenny say 'tis a very safe promis, as I never shall spel rite. I mean to try."

"Ah, Bob," I remarked, as we read this over, "you never got that pony, did you?"

"No," said Bob; "and just look here, against March 5th, that was when they got home from Paris, I've entered, 'Alf ses I spelt 500 words wrong in my letters to them. That is a crammer.'"

"Probably your verdict was correct," I replied, "for I do not expect you wrote 500 words all put together."

I will just give the last two entries in my own diary, and then begin to write out, in detail, a few of the succeeding events in our lives. Bob and I have long wished to do so, for a new era commenced a few months after our never-to-be-forgotten visit to Hastings.

May 18th, "Father was 'read out' from Little Bethel. I am very angry, but very glad for one thing—that we are not going to meeting there any longer. Bob and I had a long talk about it, and Mr. Fisher came to tea with Mr. Rivers. Mother very unhappy."

May 20th, "Father says I must not feel unkindly towards the Brethren because they have read him out.

But I am so naughty. I cannot help being angry with anyone who thinks father not good. He's the best man ever born. Father says the Brethren acted 'up to their principles, and conscientiously, according to their lights.' Bob and I wonder how it is that an unkind thing can be made a right one, because it is done conscientiously! I wish we could understand all these queer ways. Father says we must pray to be led right, and learn to love even our enemies! It's very hard, but we mean to *try*." After a large N.B., again, I'm sorry to find I added, as a reservation—"its no *use* to *try* to love Lydia Giggles, so I won't. She's *too* stupid. Then all the Phules family, I can't *love* them either, and I don't believe God means us to."

"Ah, Bob dear," I said, as I read this out to him, "when I told father that I never should get to love everyone, he explained to me that I must always try to separate the *sin* from the *sinner*. To love the divine spark, which is germ-like in every human being; but we may *hate the evil* which conceals and stifles the good."

"This is most true," answered Bob, "and it is only by receiving the loving spirit of Christ that we can possibly be enabled to carry out this principle. Truly indeed does Paul say of 'Charity'—or Love—it 'beareth all things,' 'suffereth long,' 'hopeth all things,' 'is not easily provoked.' 'Love never faileth.'"



CHAPTER II.

ENTER MRS. CLAIR.

IT was one lovely evening early in May. Bob and I were returning from a long walk over Beech-common, when for the first time, we saw our dear friend, Mrs. Clair. We always look back upon our introduction to her, with feelings of gratitude and gladness.

Poor Bob was in terrible sorrow, for his dear mamma had passed away to her spirit home, during the previous March. Several circumstances had recently occurred, which had drawn our attention to the subject of so-called "Modern Spiritualism." From some few things we knew of it, it did not seem especially "modern," but rather as if it had always been an important factor in the lives of good people, in all times. It certainly did not seem entirely strange to us. We recalled, with never-failing delight the details of my dream, which my father had taught

us to look upon as sent by God, to teach us of our spirit home. And Bob and I longed now to *know*, whether his dear mamma was really living in one of the beautiful houses, surrounded by all things so lovely, as I had seen them.

We very soon had cause to believe that our friend was sent to us in this, our time of need, by the Heavenly Father, to teach us about the strange, invisible world. I remember so well that walk, during which Bob and I, as usual, had been talking earnestly upon this topic. We had just turned down Love-lane, from Beech-common, when who should we see at the further end, but father and a lady, with whom he was evidently in deep conversation.

He soon caught sight of us, and coming quickly forward as we ran to join him, remarked to his companion, "I wish my little Jenny and Bob had met us sooner; I know all you have been telling me would have interested them greatly. My dears," he continued, turning towards us, "this is Mrs. Clair, a lady whose friendship will help you both very much."

Mrs. Clair held out her hand to us, and smiling happily said, "I shall be very glad to make the acquaintance of the children, Mr. Greatheart. Will you let them come to tea with me to-morrow afternoon? My daughter Elfie will be charmed to find some young companions. You know, Mr. Greatheart," she added, looking at father with a peculiar

smile on her face, "it is not *everybody* will venture to enter our cottage; we have met with some strange looks since we came to the town two months ago!"

"I fear you have," returned father, smiling, "but I do not suppose you feel any the worse for them."

"Ah, no," replied Mrs. Clair, "we are used to such things now, and take no notice. We learn to know our real friends, and to value congenial friendship as truly, as to dislike mere conventional acquaintances. But I must now hasten home; let the children come quite early—by four o'clock, if possible, and I hope you and Mrs. Greatheart will join us, if she will excuse so unceremonious an invitation."

"I shall be delighted to call in for the children when I leave business, and will convey your kind message to my wife," replied father. "I am sure I can promise they will not fail to be with you early, as you so kindly desire."

Bob and I, shaking hands with Mrs. Clair, walked on over the meadow towards my home, whilst father accompanied Mrs. Clair to her pretty villa, which was not very far along the road from where we had been standing. When within sight of my father's house we saw Brothers Howler and Smorlbrane coming out at the front gate.

"Ah, Bob!" I exclaimed, "mother is always miserable after any of the Brethren have been. I often wish your minister would come to see us sometimes."

"I am sure he would," replied Bob, "if invited. I know he thinks very highly of your father."

"Yes," said I, "everybody does, except the Brethren. Brother Howler positively says they must *read him out*, because he will not think exactly as they do in all ways." Mother was waiting at the gate, watching the receding forms of Messrs. Howler and Smorlbrane with a very sad, perplexed expression of countenance. "Mother," I said, as we came up to her, "Bob and I are going to tea with Mrs. Clair to-morrow."

"Who says so?" exclaimed mother, in an excited tone.

"Father says we may go," I replied, feeling decidedly subdued by mother's manner. And then I was beginning to tell her how we had met and conversed with Mrs. Clair, when in walked father.

Turning to him, mother said: "James, Jenny says she and Bob are going to see Mrs. Clair! It will never do!"

"Why not?" asked father. "I am most pleased for them to be going. Mrs. Clair sent a very kind invitation to you also. And I was hoping you might consent to accompany me in the evening, to fetch the children."

Mother stood aghast! "James!" said she, in a sad wailing tone, "James! Do you know Mrs. Clair is a Spiritualist? Brother Howler has just told me so."

"Well," replied father, "ever since I had the pleasure of making her acquaintance, nearly two months ago, I have had a growing conviction that she is a truly excellent, holy woman. But this evening, for the first time, I learned from herself that she is one of those peculiar people called 'Spiritualists.'"

"And *yet* you would have me go to see her, and will allow the children to go! Oh, James, how will all this end?"

Mother sat down looking greatly distressed.

The fact was that father's wide and liberal (but, as the Brethren called them, sad and unscriptural) notions, had of late become the principal topic of conversation amongst the members of the community assembling at Little Bethel.

On mother's account only, had they so long ignored father's many delinquencies. At last he had gone just a little *too* far. Matters could not go on thus much longer, it was quite evident. James Greatheart was now *positively* on visiting terms with a Spiritualist, and had expressed so much sympathy with some of the views held by these deluded individuals, that there was great reason to fear that father was, at heart, one himself.

Why, he had positively declared to Brother Howler, that there was no reason to suppose God did not reveal Himself to His children, in dreams and visions of the night *now*, as in the days of old! James Greatheart had been presumptuous enough to say openly,

that miracles such as we read of in the Bible had *not* ceased. He had challenged Brothers Howler, or Smorlbrane, or any one of the Brethren, to their face (at one of their meetings) to find a single text to disprove his statement, *and they could not.*

This must be stopped. The vials of Heaven's wrath must surely burst upon father's devoted head. Ere they did so it would be wise to "read him out," to let him be denounced and dismissed, as one who was unworthy of being admitted to "the table."

All this state of affairs had been discussed between poor mother and the Brothers Howler and Smorlbrane that very evening. No wonder her distress was great at the intelligence we bore, of our introduction to this embodiment of all Spiritualistic diabolism! For Mrs. Clair was said to be a Medium!

Bob and I looked at each other in dismay. Quietly taking our seats by the window, we waited to hear the result of the coming interview.

Father went across the room; sitting down by mother he took her hand, as was his wont, when about to hold a serious conversation. Said he: "Dear Jane, do you know what it *is* to be a Spiritualist?"

"Don't ask me, James," replied mother, in an excited tone, taking up a stocking she had been darning. "Don't ask me. How *should* I know what it is to be a Spiritualist? Brother Howler says they are all led of the devil, giving way to all kinds of evil devices, and that's enough for me. I never want

to know anything about Spiritualism, or to meet with any Spiritualists. They are a bad lot." Mother paused for want of breath, and desperately flung the undarned stocking from her.

Very quietly dear father spoke, more like one in a reverie than as if he were addressing any of us.

"Christ, the greatest Spiritualist, the God-Man, when He was reviled, reviled not again. Was it not said of Him, He hath a devil! Are we, His followers, to look for better things? Let us be content to follow Him, and accept the Cross which He bore."

Father ceased speaking. Mother, who was now quietly crying, looked up in a few minutes, and said, "Dear James, I know it is your desire to walk in the path of duty, but I cannot help mourning, now you are wandering so far from the fold! Oh, James! Brother Smorlbrane says no Spiritualist can be a Christian! because they only look upon Christ as a man, a great medium!—whatever that word may mean. He says it will be a sin for the Brethren to allow you to 'sit at the table' with them any longer; they must 'read you out.'"

It did not seem to me that father took much notice of mother's words,—in fact, I question whether he heard them, for he sat quietly looking out upon the pretty green lawn for some few minutes after mother had ceased speaking. Then he said: "The more I know of Spiritualism in all its varied phases, the more I feel that I *have* been a Spiritualist all my life.

When I compare what I am now learning, with what I know of the lives of many of the most eminent Christians, I discover Spiritualism has been so completely intertwined with all the deepest spiritual and inner life of these good people, that I begin to realise how the best Christians are—whether consciously so or not—the truest and most earnest Spiritualists.

“Do you know, Jane, that I am beginning to suspect that Spiritualism is the very groundwork of all religious life. It is true the forms which it assumes are very varied, but if they begin by very material phenomena, they become more and more refined, till they become so celestial that only very devout persons can enter into them. They may be well compared to Jacob’s ladder, which rests on a pile of hard stones at the bottom, but is lost in the glory of Heaven at the top. The phenomenal, or lowest phase, is the first rung in the ladder, which thus firmly placed upon earth reaches up step by step, into the highest sphere of Divine and angelic life. Of all the varied forms of religious worship throughout the world, is not the first principle a seeking after the God who hides Himself in the universe, and the communion between that Spirit of Nature around us, and the human Spirit within us?”

“It sounds very atheistic to me,” interrupted mother, very sadly. “Brother Smorlbrane told me the other day, James, that this Spiritualism is the necromancy spoken of in the Bible, and against

which we are all warned. He read me those texts in Deuteronomy about witches being an abomination to the Lord,* and says that that verse in 1 Timothy" (here mother was turning over the leaves of the Bible which she had reached from off the side table),—"here it is, the fourth chapter, first verse: 'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils,'—all refers to Spiritualism. Oh, James! be warned in time before it is too late."

"Do I not often say, dear Jane," replied father, "that there is no book so *mis*-quoted as the Bible; by taking isolated texts, there is no form of belief on the face of the earth, which cannot be proved from them. With reference to this especial text, looked at from my point of view, I should question whether the Spiritualists are not returning *to* the faith, from which the Christian Church, as a body, have for some long time departed."

"Oh, James," sighed mother; "what next?"

"The truth is," continued father, ignoring mother's ejaculation, "that the references in the Bible to 'necromancy' are very few indeed. I acknowledge that these few passages do distinctly warn us against the diabolical *abuse* of Spiritualism. But there is a far larger amount of evidence, throughout the Scrip-

* See Deuteronomy, xviii.

tures, that this intercommunion between the two worlds is capable of a Divine *use*, as well as of a Satanic abuse! Now, I find that all Christian Spiritualists look upon this influx of Spiritualism, as a fulfilment of many prophecies in the Bible. Jenny," remarked father, turning towards me, "your eyes are younger than mine; I cannot see the small print in this Bible, but turn to the second chapter of the Book of Joel, and see what he says about pouring the Spirit upon all flesh."

"Here it is," I exclaimed, "in the twenty-eighth verse. 'And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.' Why, father," I exclaimed, "don't you remember when I had my lovely dream about Jesus, you said God gave it me; and when Bob and I were in the boat, and saw and spoke to Jesus, that was a vision, was it not?"

"Of course," said Bob, "and you, Mr. Greatheart, taught us that text in Job. Look it out, Jenny; it's in the thirty-third chapter."

"Here it is—the fifteenth and sixteenth verses," and I read: "'For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man; in slumberings upon the bed, then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.'"

Said mother, looking up sadly, "That's nothing to do with Spiritualism. Spiritualists turn tables, rap on the walls, and I don't know what other foolish things."

Here Bob jumped up and said to mother, "Mrs. Greatheart, that's just what my father used to say, and although he never thought about the devil being in the matter, he called it 'Psychic Force, or Electricity.' But I have been telling Jenny what wonderful things have come to us at home lately. Last Sunday evening one of mamma's old schoolfellows, Miss Joy, was with us, and she is what you call a medium. We sat round the table, five of us only—at our large dining-room table, and it soon tilted. Then Miss Joy repeated the alphabet, and at certain letters the table gave a jerk or tilt. Papa wrote down all these letters; it seemed such nonsense when we looked at the paper on which he had written them, but we found it to be a very nice sentence. It was—'Help us, your Spirit friends, to come to you. Pray always.'"

Mother looked up, bewildered. Father was much pleased.

"What did Mr. Rivers say to that?" asked father.

"Papa said he did not know before that psychic force or electricity were intelligent beings, and that this message, though short, was very wonderful."

"The devil would not tell us to pray always," I

ventured to say. For though not often afraid of expressing my small opinions, even before mother, I did feel that we had now entered upon a very wonderful subject, and whilst Bob and I, as usual, had done little else but talk over the strange things which were certainly happening in the houses of several families in the town, I had not yet mentioned it before mother; of course, I was longing to tell father, but had had no opportunity. Said father: "I should much like to be present at some séance, as I believe these meetings among the Spiritualists are styled."

"Miss Joy is a writing medium, Mr. Greatheart," said Bob, "and she has read us some of her messages. I copied one, she gave it to me, and I brought it to show to you and Jenny. May I read it?"

"Do, dear Bob," said father, "I am delighted to learn anything about this interesting subject."

Mother rose to leave the room. "Won't you listen to the message, Jane?" said father.

"No, no; I dare not," she replied, and left us, to go to water the plants in the front garden.

"I hope mother will soon think differently about all this," I said. "I feel so sorry to see her so unhappy."

"Yes," replied father, "she is a good woman, but finds it difficult to enter upon any phase of thought, at all outside the sphere in which she has moved all her life."

"Now, Bob," I said, "do read that lovely message again" (for I had heard it before).

"It purports to be from the Spirit-mother of the medium," said Bob, "about a dearly-loved friend who had but recently passed away." And then read: "'Yes, your dear E. is with us. Not yet quite conscious, but gradually, as in a dream, does the perception grow upon her that the dreaded portals of the grave are past, and yet *she is herself* in her own individuality, rejoicing, as she well deserves to rejoice, in the presence of the many who loved her, and who, through long years, have watched over and helped her at all times of anxiety. She will soon come to you, for her interest in Spiritualism was sufficient to enable her quickly to grasp, as a glorious truth, the fact that she will still be able to be with, and aid, all those near and dear to her on earth. Thank God that death does not mean loss of individuality, as with many it is tantamount to, in their unwise belief. Thank God that we awake in our Spirit home with the same loves, and, alas! I must say, with the same hates we had on earth. We are not changed by the process of transition called death, we are free from the body—that is all, and we are able to face things in their true light then. For the true man will at once discard all that was not true, but to which he did cling whilst in the body, as truth.'"

"Did you see that written?" asked father.

"No," answered Bob, "this was copied for me from one of many volumes of similar Spirit communications given by the writing mediumship. But Miss Joy did take the pencil to see whether the influence would come, for she seldom really knows beforehand. In a very few minutes when I was with her, her hand moved rapidly up and down, scribbling all over the paper. When the leaf was turned over, her hand seemed to get quiet, and a short message came for papa. It was only, '*Be not faithless, but believing. Tests will come to you when least expected. We seldom can give them when anxiously looked for.*' That was from his mother."

Father, rising from his chair, walked up and down the room.

"This is wonderful," said he, "but I think I have now found the key to many mysteries of my past life! It is beautiful! And I thank God for vouchsafing to me this knowledge."

"I must go home now," said Bob, "Maggie will wonder where I am." And wishing us good-night, he ran down the garden, vaulted over the gate, and was soon out of sight.





CHAPTER III.

“WHERE THERE IS NO VISION THE PEOPLE PERISH.”

THE subject of the previous evening's conversation was evidently resumed by father and mother, as soon as they awoke in the morning, for I was aroused from a dreamless sleep by father's voice, saying, “*Where there is no vision the people perish.*”

After a few minutes' pause, during which I heard mother stirring, putting things in order—according to her custom—she said, “Well, James, supposing this new-fangled notion is true, I cannot see the use of it!”

“On the contrary,” replied father, “it seems to me of the very highest importance. Spiritualism is the life-giving element to all true religion. It ennobles our present life, throwing a clear light over many of the mysteries of human suffering which surround us on every side. It makes us realise,

more than anything else can, the necessity of living a pure and holy life, *not only outwardly*, but in the inmost heart. To do this, we find we must literally strive against evil spirits, who are always on the watch to gain power over us."

"Religion teaches all that," said mother, interrupting father. "I don't see how Spiritualism helps, a bit."

"The true religion of Christ does teach all this," replied father, "and the *theory* is preached from all our pulpits: but until looked at from a spiritualistic point of view, its practical sense is not realised. Spiritualism does not create, or even first announce this truth, but it makes it live, and walk, and work. It lifts it out of speculation, and gives it a place in the busy activities of daily existence. Paul writes, 'For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness, in the heavenly places.'* Spiritualists take this text in a far more literal sense than other Christians, and are therefore, I think, in a better position to fight against all forms of evil, effectually."

"Oh, James," exclaimed mother, sadly, "one would think, to hear you talk, that we had never had religion before, if these new fancies are of such great

* Ephesians vi. 12, New Version.

importance. I'm sure we've done without them so long, we don't want them now. I like the safe old doctrines, such as Brother Howler teaches."

Said father, "I do not wish to speak or think unkindly of Brother Howler, or of any men who conscientiously cling to what they believe to be true. But, my dear Jane, I must say that much of what is called religion is only theology. Good, bad, or indifferent theology it may be, but at any rate it is open to debate."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed mother, interrupting father abruptly, "what ever *is* theology, if it is not religion? It's all one, I'm sure!"

"By no means," replied father, in his usual calm manner; "theology is a purely intellectual and systematic expression of doctrines and facts, derived from Scripture, or experience, and therefore is liable to the faults, imperfections, and errors of all human productions. Religion is communion between the individual spirit of man, and that divine spirit from whom, and with whom, we all 'live, move, and have our being.' In this way, true heart-felt religion lies not in creeds, or fixed dogmas, but in the spiritual training of each separate spirit. There are such diversities of opinion on every side, and truly, various minds need various kinds of spiritual food."

"What nonsense!" ejaculated mother in an undertone, but father, not noticing her, went on, rather as if soliloquising. (It was often so with him, for his

thoughts seemed to soar far away from us, his simple listeners, when he once fell into one of his musing moods.) He continued: "There is a Trinity running throughout the universe. Every human being is Triune, thus typifying his Creator, God, who made us in His image. The physical nature, that is the body, requires good nourishing food, to preserve it in health, or it will fail, become weak or diseased, and perish, before its natural term is completed. Then the soul dwindles to a mere nonentity, if not nourished with suitable intellectual food, which can only be supplied by congenial fellowship, good reading, &c. Again, our spirit nature must be developed by prayer, and close communion with the Father over all, by a resolute resistance of all evil, and a continual striving after all good."

Father paused.

Mother said, "I can't make it out at all—but I expect the kettle boils by now; I'll go and make tea."

Taking up her key basket she went downstairs, whilst I finished dressing as quickly as I could, wishing to have a good practice at my music before going to school, so that I might be ready to accompany Bob to Mrs. Clair's early in the afternoon, as we had arranged.

It was a lovely, bright May morning, so warm that we drew the breakfast table close up to the large bow window, throwing it wide open, to let in the pure breath of Heaven, laden, as it was, with sweet

perfume from the chestnut trees, now so richly clothed in their pink and white blossoms. The birds were carolling their welcome to spring; the quiet, gentle rustling of the trees which surrounded our pretty cottage, brought a peaceful calm into our midst, and harmonised well with our feelings as we joined in father's favourite hymn. His voice sounded fuller than usual, and I think I had never before felt, so much, the real beauty of the simple tune and words :—

“I need Thee every hour,
Most gracious God ;
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford.

“I need Thee every hour,
Stay Thou near by.
Temptations lose their power
When Thou art nigh.

“I need Thee every hour,
In joy, or pain ;
Come quickly, and abide,
Or life is vain.

“I need Thee every hour,
Most Holy One.
Oh ! make me Thine indeed,
Thou blessed Son.”

Father offered up a short prayer, after which we sat down to breakfast.

“We can never tire of those sweet words,” said

he. "It is so true, 'I need Thee every hour!' What would life be without the close presence of Jesus, the God in Christ?"

Mother poured out the tea, and as she passed my cup, observed, "Brother Smorlbrane says Spiritualists do not believe in Christ. They think He was only a medium."

Said father, "Brother Smorlbrane's views upon this point, at any rate, are of the *most* limited. A more sweeping charge could scarcely be made. Probably he does not know that Spiritualists may be numbered by millions—that is, reckoning the vast multitude who belong to them, though unconsciously, like myself."

Mother looked up, but did not speak, as father went on :

"The truth is, that Spiritualism is a science as well as a religion. It is the one thing which will combine the two. Thus, men representing every form of thought throughout the whole world may be, and, in fact, *are* drawn into the spiritualistic circles. There is but one universal creed amongst Spiritualists, and that is, the knowledge of a communication between our material universe and the spirit world. No Spiritualist *could* be an infidel; it would be an impossible paradox. But minds embracing every form of thought—whether religious, philosophical, or scientific—may and do believe in Spiritualism. Then its phases are so very varied, embracing such

a wide sphere of thought and experience, from the lowest forms of external spirit manifestation to the highest phase, which alone brings us into close intercourse with God and the high spheres of angel-life. Thus, do you not see how evident it is, that when anyone like Brother Smorlbrane, fixes upon some special form of belief or non-belief, as the inevitable outcome of Spiritualism, he shows an utter ignorance of the very first elements of this grand subject?"

"Brother Smorlbrane is a very learned man," observed mother; but father, returning to his chair, continued, without noticing the somewhat doubtful verdict mother had just given with reference to Mr. Smorlbrane's abilities.

"Even from my limited knowledge of Spiritualism I can emphatically deny the truth of that most absurd accusation, that Spiritualism leads us away from Christ. True, it *does* sweep away the cobwebs of the hard old theology which shuts us up to nature, and closes heaven from us, which have through priest-ridden ages so overgrown the simple teachings of Christ that they have become scarcely recognizable. Spiritualism removes what I will call the *tares*; but the *wheat*—the soul-inspiring truth taught by Christ (the incarnation of our loving Father)—is preserved. When the Church has been freed from these arbitrary limitations, fresh spiritual life will be possible, and thus multitudes will be brought to the fold, who have wandered, seeking for the Christ so long hidden

from their view, but now revealed in fresh loveliness and splendour. Surely it must be plain that a belief which makes life less secular, which not only expands its horizon, but opens up bright realms which were quite invisible before, ought to make religion easier, life less commonplace, and earth more sacred. Religion is stifled in a close atmosphere, where only the four walls which we have built around us can be seen. It needs the breadth and the light of heaven. Whether Spiritualists are right or wrong, they do certainly manage to escape out of the mud-huts of materialism; they somehow live in a world in which all antecedent improbabilities affecting revelation, cease to exist, and where no belief is incredible simply because it is too unworldly, too far removed from experience, too ethereal, too strange."

Said mother, reverting to an expression which father had used, but which he had almost forgotten, "What do you mean by saying you have been a Spiritualist, though unconsciously?"

"I mean," replied father, "that Spiritualism explains the strange but beautiful experiences we have, as a family, had from my earliest years."

"I never had any experience of the kind," said mother. "I never heard a rap, or saw a spirit!"

"But, mother," I exclaimed, "did not your grandfather see your mother soon after she died?"

"Ah! So he said, poor dear man," answered mother, "but I don't believe it. Grandfather just

fancied he saw poor mother because he was so cut up at her death—she was his eldest and favourite daughter. To be sure, I must say we all noticed how much better and happier he was, after what he called his ‘vision,’ but we never heard him say much about it; he knew we did not care to listen to him when he spoke of such things.”

“When I said that we, as a family, had had experiences,” remarked father, “I was thinking of my own childhood, when I used to see and hear many strange things—so strange that I do not think I ever mentioned them to anyone. I used to hear such lovely music at times in the night. Once I woke up and saw a white cloud-like appearance standing at the foot of my little bed. As I looked the cloud dispersed, revealing a most glorious angel—at least, I called it an angel. It looked so lovingly at me, and then gradually vanished.”

“Were you frightened, father?” I asked breathlessly, for he had not told me of this incident in his life before.

“Oh, no! dear Jenny. Why should I have been frightened? Be sure our Father does not send us these bright visions to frighten, but to help us. Then I have told you often of your dear aunt Editha, how she used to come to my mother, and tell us of her lovely spirit home. We seldom spoke of these spiritual matters outside our own family circle.”

“Ah!” exclaimed mother, “a very imaginative

lot, all of you. Jenny takes after your family, not mine, with her dreams and visions. It's not healthy. I do trust she won't become hysterical, or get St. Vitus's dance. I should not wonder if she did."

I was just going to ask what kind of dance St. Vitus's might be, but having now done breakfast mother began to pile up the cups and saucers.

"What time does Bob fetch you this afternoon?" asked father. "Mrs. Clair wishes you to go quite early. And I hope poor Bob will be cheered a little. He and they all naturally feel Mrs. Rivers' removal very much."

"Ah, poor dears," said mother, "'tis a sad blow for the family; but everyone in the town knew she could never live through another winter, although the Hastings air did seem to set her up for a time. They are a consumptive lot—shouldn't wonder if Bob went off in the same way, some day!"

"Mother, mother!" I screamed out, "don't talk so! Bob is quite well and strong." And I ran away, for I never could bear these gloomy prognostications of mother's. Happily they very seldom came true. And I rejoice to say that Bob has escaped consumption; and as for me, neither my laughter nor my tears have ever been hysteric; and, often as I have danced, it has never been to the tune of St. Vitus.



CHAPTER IV.

FAIRY DELL.

MY lessons were not very perfectly repeated that morning. I remember I lost several marks, and that silly Lydia Giggles asked me why Bob Rivers had not taught me to say them better. How I did dislike that girl!

Mother would not consent to accompany father in the evening. She remarked that the Brethren were quite angry enough about father's intimacy with a Spiritualist, and she did not wish to provoke them further. "Besides which," she added, "I have no inclination myself to learn anything about Spiritualism, and am better away. I'm sorry the children are going."

Bob came for me soon after three o'clock. It was a half-holiday for us both, or we could not have met so early. We had time to practise some of our songs

before starting for Fairy Dell, which was the name of Mrs. Clair's cottage.

We walked round by the fields, through Love-lane meadows, calling in for a few minutes to see how Lilly was getting on, and to tell her of our visit to Mrs. Clair.

I wish I could describe the lovely view which presented itself before us, as we turned the corner from Chestnut Grove, and beheld Fairy Dell nestling amidst a wealth of foliage, and adorned with the sweetest flowers of the later spring. There was a stillness in the air—a glorious brightness all around—a brightness which would have been too dazzling by the sea, but, resting, as it did, over an expanse of green-clad meadows, and groves of trees just freshly clothed in the richness of their spring attire, it was lovely beyond expression.

Mrs. Clair was on the lawn, gathering some flowers, and arranging them very artistically in a pretty little basket, held ready for her by a sweet-looking young girl, who proved to be her daughter Elfie.

"Here comes Jenny Greatheart and her brother," exclaimed Mrs. Clair, as we walked through the garden-gate. "Now we shall have time before tea to show them all about the garden."

"Yes," said Elfie, running to meet us, "and they can see my rabbits and doves."

We thus became at once at home with each other,

having no time to feel shyness, or think about it either.

"Bob is not my brother, Mrs. Clair," I said, feeling rather amused at her mistake.

"Not your brother?" replied Mrs. Clair; "then please introduce him to me, my dear."

"He is Bob Rivers," I answered, "and his father has the book-shop and library in High Street. But we are just as if we were brother and sister. We have always known each other."

"We went to the infant-school together," added Bob, looking up into Mrs. Clair's smiling face, "and were always in the same class."

"Bob always took care of me," I said. "He never let any of the children tease me."

"How old are you, Jenny?" Mrs. Clair asked.

"I shall be thirteen next August—on the twenty-fourth; and Bob will be thirteen on the twenty-ninth of May," I replied. "So he is only three months older than I am."

After exploring the pretty grounds, looking at Elfie's rabbits and other pets, we went into the house.

It was a charming little nook, furnished in exquisite taste, but with nothing gaudy, or what seemed to me frivolous about it. Engravings were hanging upon the walls; large oil-paintings adorned the hall and staircase; bookshelves fitted up in every available corner, and filled with books which looked as if

they had been well read, gave evidence of the intellectual character of the inmates of the house. A piano, standing open, with music scattered over it, and on the chairs around, imparted an air of home-like comfort to the drawing-room, refreshingly in contrast with the prim appearance of such rooms in some houses.

By the time we had assembled round the tea-table, Bob and I felt as if we had known both Mrs. Clair and Elfie all our lives.

In the centre of the table, stood the basket of flowers, which we found Mrs. Clair arranging on our arrival. Several elegant small vases also stood about the table and room, with various flowers in them.

"Are you a medium, Mrs. Clair?" asked Bob, soon after we had taken our seats.

"What do you know about mediums?" responded Mrs. Clair, whilst Elfie looked up with a bright, happy smile.

"Not much, yet," answered Bob. "But Miss Joy, an old friend of dear mamma's, is now staying with us, and has told us a great deal about Spiritualism since she came, a month ago. She is a medium."

"I am so glad you know about Spiritualism," said Elfie; "now I may say just what I like, without any fear of surprising you or making you look at me as if you thought I was crazy!" and here Elfie gave a merry laugh, in which we all joined from sympathy, for we did not yet see, why any knowledge of

Spiritualism was necessary to assure us of the sanity of such a bright, lovely-looking girl as Elfie. She was nearly fourteen, she told us, but seemed just as much of a girl as I felt myself to be.

At this moment I heard some tiny raps, apparently on the table, close by Elfie. I was about to ask why she was rapping, when Bob looked up, saying, "Listen, Jenny, those are like spirit-raps! I told you we often have them at meals when Miss Joy is at the table."

"'Tis Eva," said Mrs. Clair, "she is giving you both a loving welcome!"

I felt excited, and almost startled at first, for it was so new to me, although Bob had, of course, been telling me everything that had been going on at his home since Miss Joy's arrival.

"Who is Eva?" I asked.

"My twin sister," replied Elfie. "She is often with us, and if I have any young friends to see me, Eva is almost sure to join us."

"How I wish we could see her!" said Bob, and as he spoke the tiny raps grew louder.

"That is beautiful," exclaimed Elfie, joyously; and in a sweet, clear voice she suddenly burst out singing that exquisite song of Handel's—

"Angels ever bright and fair,
Take, oh! take me to your care."

To our great delight and wonder, the rappings kept

perfect time with the music, becoming more emphatic and apparently most joyous, when the singing ceased.

Said Elfie: "'Tis a happy sign when Eva can knock so easily; it shows the *rapport* is well established, and if she did not like you both this would not be. That was her favourite song, and before she passed away she often said that if possible to join us in spirit, and 'beat time' to the music, she would do so, and then she used to say, gladly: 'You'll all know it is your Eva by your side.'"

"How delightful!" exclaimed Bob. "But what does *rapport* mean? Miss Joy often uses that word when speaking of the spirits."

"It means," replied Mrs. Clair, "to be so in harmony with the spirits present, as to be able easily to receive some sign of their presence. Where there is no *rapport* there can be no communication, any more than there could be a message communicated by telegraphy, if the wires were broken or disarranged."

A few minutes passed, whilst we sat thinking over Mrs. Clair's words. Nothing broke the stillness of the room save the ticking of the clock over the mantelpiece, and the tiny raps, which came now from all parts of the room.

At last I asked whether Eva, the spirit sister, could communicate in any other more definite way.

"Ah, yes, dear Jenny," said Mrs. Clair. "Both Elfie and I have seen her and spoken to her."

"And she writes messages through my hand," exclaimed Elfie, interrupting her mamma in the pleasurable excitement she felt in witnessing our deep interest.

"Yes, dears," put in Mrs. Clair, "in truth we do not now feel to have *lost* her, but rather have we gained an angelic companion in the place of an earthly one."

"But still," I said, "it must have been a dreadful trouble to you when your Eva died."

Scarcely had I time to utter this word when a loud rap came close to my side on the table. I started, and Elfie, laughing, said: "Eva will not let us use that word. Once she said to me, very soon after passing away, 'Elfie, do not say I am dead. I *live* more than ever I did when I was in my weary body. I am *well* now, and can sing, dance, run about, and enjoy my life. The best of all is that I am not separated from you and dear mamma, but am often with you—so I am *not dead*,'" and as these words were uttered, raps, evidently corroborative of the sentiments, resounded on every side.

"It is the *body* only that *dies*," observed Mrs. Clair, evidently in response to my look of wonder. "Do you not remember what Paul says in 15th chapter 1 Cor., the whole of which refers so exquisitely to the rising of the spiritual body upon the death of

the earthly one? Especially notice the 44th verse : 'If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.' "

Said Bob : " Miss Joy told us last Sunday, the spirits say Paul meant, that as the body we live in on earth dies, and is buried, the spirit body (which is, at first, just like the earthly body) rises and goes to its home in the spirit-land. There is no death—to the spirit. But, oh ! dear, I cannot help wishing my dear mamma was with me still in the body ; it is so lonely without her," and here poor Bob, quite overpowered, broke down, and wept bitterly.

Mrs. Clair rose from her chair. Sitting down by Bob, she gently stroked his hair, until the first paroxysm of grief was somewhat subdued.

"Don't cry so, dear boy," she said ; "your dear one is grieved to see you like this, I know."

"How can I help it?" sobbed Bob. "I can never be really happy again, as I used to be; we loved her so very, very much."

"I am sure of that, dear boy," replied Mrs. Clair. "And loving her so truly, you wish to do all in your power to make her happy."

Poor Bob could not reply, but he looked up, and evidently made a strong effort to recover composure.

"Elfie," said Mrs. Clair, "fetch me the last copy of *Light*, and see if you can find that beautiful little incident narrated by 'A.M.H.W.' I am sure it will help to comfort dear Bob."

"Here it is," said Elfie, "headed, 'Consolatory thoughts for the bereaved.' Shall I read it?"

"Yes, do, dear," replied her mamma, and Elfie read:—

" 'A mother, named Avola, was grieving inconsolably for a lost child, a son. In the midst of her grief she saw a vision of children joyfully sporting and advancing in a troop towards a beautiful city. She sought with anxious eyes to discover amongst them her own child. At length she perceived him—but alas! it was in sorrow, and walking with dejected mien, and slow steps, following the others with difficulty, being oppressed with a heavy mourning garment. Sighing, he said to his mother, 'See, mother! the clothing which thou wettest with thy tears, and makest heavy, hinders me from following the others. Pray leave off thy sorrowing, if thou truly lovest me, and pray earnestly for my happy advancement.'

"That narrative," said Elfie, "is copied by 'A.M.H.W.' from a Catholic book, but do you not remember the beautiful little story which she told you once? Soon after Eva went 'A.M.H.W.' said that a Swedish mother who had lost her little boy, and was very sad, had a dream, in which she saw a number of beautiful children, each of whom had a lamp burning in its hand, but her own son, whom she saw among them, had a lamp, not burning. On asking him how that was, '*Ah! dear mother,*' he said, '*your*

tears have put out my lamp !' This cured her of grieving."

We were all absorbed in the interest of these extracts.

Bob's face had almost resumed its usual bright, happy expression. Said he, after a few minutes' silence, turning towards Mrs. Clair, "Do you really think, then, that mamma is unhappy when we cry because she has gone away? And will it *really help her* for us to leave off being sorry?"

"I am sure of it," replied Mrs. Clair; "we, you and I, Elfie," she said, looking with a happy smile towards Elfie, "are quite sure dear Eva was helped very much as soon as we began to be glad for her sake, that she had gone home."

"I don't know how I can ever help being sorry," said Bob. "It is not so hard just now, while we are talking about her, and I feel as if she was near me." Here a succession of gladsome raps were given near to Bob, and Elfie said, "Eva tells me that is your mamma rapping."

Whilst I thought to myself, how *could* Eva have told her? Bob went on, "Will she ever rap like that when I am not with you? I know when I go home, and see her empty chair, her work-basket, her books, and everything that reminds me she has gone away, I shall be as unhappy as ever."

Mrs. Clair looked at Bob so kindly, her sweet face full of sympathy and love. Said she, in a quiet,

reverent tone, "Dear Bob, it is only the loving Father can help you. You must ask Him to do so. Ask Him to prepare you to be able to receive proof of the spirit presence of your beloved mamma. We know it is His will that we should have ministering spirits around us. They come from Him to help us in all ways. But the world has so long been distrustful—disbelieving in the power of our loved ones to come—laughing to scorn any who declared they *had* intercourse with the spirit-land in any way, that difficulties have been raised, which are often a great hindrance. If good Christians, true followers of Christ, would pray always that these difficulties might be removed, I think we should soon have very happy times."

Mrs. Clair ceased speaking, and for some minutes we sat quietly, thinking over her words.

"Mamma," said Elfie, "let us go into the garden to see the new moon rising between the pine-trees."

As we were walking across the lawn, dear father came up to the garden gate, and when the greetings were over, we all sauntered on, enjoying the glorious scene which was before us.

How clearly do I still see it, "in my mind's eye!"

Rich crimson and purple hues clothed the western horizon, as the sun was slowly sinking behind the distant hills, and threw a heavenly radiance on all around. A "stillness which might be heard" was resting over the expanse of meadow land, stretching

for miles over the country, beyond Beech-common, which lay to the right, whilst the gentle rustling from the foliage of the pine forest which sheltered the cottage from the keen north wind, mingling with the sweet song of the nightingale, breathed out such a soothing, wondrous harmony! Surely it was, as Elfie observed, the "fairies' moonlight reverie!"

"What a glorious world we live in!" exclaimed father. "Each season brings fresh beauty, and new proofs of a loving Father's over-ruling, ever-guiding hand. If *this* world is so grand, what must the spirit-land be?"

"The descriptions we have received from my dear spirit-child, Eva, of her surroundings, are marvelous," said Mrs. Clair.

"Do tell me what she says," asked Bob, earnestly. "I long to know what kind of place dear mamma lives in now."

"Dear Bob," she replied, "we will gladly let you know as much as we can." Turning to father, she added, "How thankful we ought to feel to catch these glimpses from behind the veil, even though it must always be but 'as through a glass, darkly'!"

Father replied, reverently, "Whilst we gratefully accept these privileges, and thank the Father for thus permitting us to obtain such glimpses, and, at times, to listen to the faint echoes from those heavenly

hills, may we ever remember the words, 'Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' "





CHAPTER V.

ONLY A TINY RAP.

AFTER sauntering about the garden until the sun had well gone down, we went into the drawing room and had some most enjoyable music. Both Mrs. Clair and Elfie seemed to revel in it. Mrs. Clair was not only a brilliant pianist, but so thoroughly entered into the spirit of whatever composition she was rendering, that the very notes appeared instinct with "the soul of music." Mrs. Clair's voice was a rich contralto, which harmonized well with Elfie's clear soprano. Their voices, whilst not too powerful for the room, were thrillingly sweet and musical as they poured out song after song.

Never shall I forget the soothing spiritual influence which seemed to surround us as we all united in singing that beautiful poem by "Lizzie Doten"—

The world hath felt a quickening breath
From Heaven's eternal shore ;
And souls triumphant over death
Return to earth once more.

For this we hold our jubilee,
For this with joy we sing,
O grave ! where is thy victory ?
O death ! where is thy sting ?

Our cypress wreaths are laid aside
For amaranthine flowers ;
For death's cold wave does not divide
The souls we love from ours.
From pain, and death, and sorrow free,
They join with us to sing,
O grave ! where is thy victory ?
O death ! where is thy sting ?

Immortal eyes look from above
Upon our joys to-night ;
And souls immortal in their love,
In our glad songs unite.
Across the waveless crystal sea
The notes triumphant ring :
O grave ! where is thy victory ?
O death ! where is thy sting ?

"Sweet spirits, welcome yet again !"
With loving hearts we cry ;
And, "Peace on earth, goodwill to men !"
The angel hosts reply.
From doubt and fear through truth made free,
With faith triumphant sing,
O grave ! where is thy victory ?
O death ! where is thy sting ?

Loud knocks came on the piano, beating time to
the music.

"That is Elfie's spirit-sister rapping," I said to father.

"Indeed!" he replied. "I was thinking the raps must be something of the kind, from what Mrs. Clair told me last evening."

"We frequently have some such signal from my dear child, and music is almost sure to bring her to us," remarked Mrs. Clair, rising from the piano and taking a seat on the sofa.

"A friend who, like myself," said father, "is becoming an earnest inquirer and investigator as to the truth of the extraordinary manifestations, now spreading so rapidly throughout the world, observed to me this morning, that whilst the higher phases of Spiritualism could not fail to quicken our spiritual life, and help to bring us into close harmony with Christ, he felt he never should see any sense or use in the lower manifestations, such as rappings, tilting tables, moving furniture, &c., and that he thought it was only frivolous spirits who would resort to such a form of communication."

Said Mrs. Clair: "Only gradually can we comprehend the need for much that, at first sight, is undoubtedly repellent and antagonistic to all our preconceived ideas of angel life. We must, in the first place, sustain the shock to our orthodoxy, by finding that death in nowise alters the spirit. 'As the tree falls so will it lie' is quite true *so far as it goes*. Those who in the body have been frivolous

and ignorant, will not throw aside those characteristics with the body, any more than they ever did, on earth, by changing their garments. Unhappily, the evilly disposed, untruthful man of earth will return as a spirit, and be untruthful still. In this way much mischief is, and will always be done, until these first laws of spiritual intercourse are understood, and spirit messages only accepted on their intrinsic merit, *not* as infallible because purporting to come from the spirit land. Probably the lower physical manifestations are not the work of higher spirits, because there must of necessity be vast numbers of spirits unable to fulfil more intellectual or truly spiritual offices. But their work is still of the highest importance. The spirits all say that their mission is to help to overthrow the dense materialism of the age. Some *very physical* power alone can do this amongst scientists. But as soon as these scientific investigators are compelled to acknowledge the workings of an unseen intelligence, in tilting out messages through heavy tables, or giving them some very tangible knocks on the head, with a paper tube, they may find it possible to grasp the idea that the same spiritual,—or unseen force is quite as capable of moving a human hand to write messages or receive symbolic drawings, and thus gradually will they advance in spiritual perception, and at length be enabled fully to recognise the grand fact of the constant intercourse between the two worlds."

Three loud raps of evident approbation. Said father: "I cannot say I feel these raps at all trivial, any more than a good knock at the door, announcing the presence of a dear friend, is trivial. Is it not a welcome sound *then*? Why not *now*? No! let us rejoice at any sign whatever that can be established *with certainty* between our material earth and the spirit world that lives around us, even though it be *only a tiny rap*."

After a short pause in the conversation, Bob—who was sitting close by Mrs. Clair—said to her, "Do tell me about the spirit-land, dear Mrs. Clair. I long to know more of it."

"How close Heaven is to those whose loved ones have passed on!" observed father.

"Yes, indeed!" I remarked, as I went over to sit close by his side. "Ever since dear Mrs. Rivers went, Bob and I have thought and talked of her every day. I feel sure I heard her speak one night."

"Elfie," said Mrs. Clair, "get your spiritual diary and read some of the messages which have been given to you. Bob and Jenny would like to hear."

"And so should I," remarked father.

Whilst Elfie had gone to fetch the book, Mrs. Clair told us what a delight it had been to her to come into the full belief of Spiritualism. How sad her life had been before. "But now," she continued,

"I feel able to realize more than ever before, the continual presence of Christ, and of God's ministering spirits. We are taught so much by Elfie's writing mediumship, that I can never be sufficiently thankful to the Father, God, for revealing to me this grand heavenly truth. Its influence upon dear Elfie is very sweet. I have noticed how the beautiful teachings given through her own hand, have helped to subdue her hasty temper, and brought her very near to Christ, for I can see how she now *realizes* His close presence."

Said father, "So far as I know of Spiritualism, I find that spirits who communicate, whether of a low type or from the higher spheres, ceaselessly inculcate the need and efficacy of prayer."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Clair; "it was that which first gave me a desire to look into the subject. We may be pretty sure that Satan would never help us to fight against his devices so effectually, as the life of prayer inculcated in all our spirit messages must surely do. Whilst impressing upon us the need of setting apart short times daily, to commune with God, *far more* stress is laid upon the necessity of living a life of prayer. As Eva said once to Elfie, 'God, your loving Father, is far nearer to you than any earthly father could be. He is always at hand to hear your every cry. You must talk to Him, tell Him all your little wants, and always say, "Lead Thou me on."' Again she teaches, 'It is not enough

to say prayers, words alone are useless. You must mean what you say, every word, just as you do when you ask mamma to give you anything. And you may pray at any moment of the day, and wherever you are. If during your play you feel a naughty impulse rise, resist it at once, praying, "Help me, my Father." And thus the spirit influence around you will be kept pure."

Here Elfie came in with the volume of copied spirit messages. Mrs. Clair opened it, remarking, "I scarcely know which message to fix upon, all are so beautifully helpful." After turning over a few pages, she said, "I think this one from my sister will be apropos to what we have been speaking of, Mr. Greatheart. I will read it. In answer to some remark I had been making, is written, 'Yes, my beloved sister, it rejoices us to communicate more than it rejoices you to receive. It is more real to us than it is to you. . . . We bid you rejoice in this power of communion, and whilst using discrimination and prayer, we beg you not to reject our words. Do not be disappointed that we can convey to you so little. Remember that all the good we can do is not comprised in the words we communicate only, but in the power we use, as God's appointed guardian spirits to watch over, to tend, to help you, each one, in the varied vicissitudes of your life. Seek prayerfully for the highest good, the communion of the Holy Spirit, and all lesser good in the form of

spirit communion with your loved ones, will be added."

"Ah, that is beautiful teaching," remarked father.

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Clair, "but now I must find a short extract for Bob's own comfort. I will read one of the first words given to me by my beloved papa, and this description may typify the entrance to spirit life of all who, like him and dear Mrs. Rivers, were living in harmony with the all-embracing influence of God, prayerfully seeking to follow in Christ's steps. Thus he writes: 'My home of rest was truly the threshold of heaven, the very gates of prayer and holiness. My child, I first aroused to my spirit-sense of sight, and was rejoiced by the marvellous, the wonderful ethereal beauty of all around. The scenery was majestic in grandeur, and fairy-like in all details of wondrous beauty, far beyond the power of human tongue to describe, or of finite spirit to imagine. There was music in all things, as I became more fully aware, by the opening of my sense of hearing. For the spirit language is a song of praise, of love, of joy. My children, rejoice that the songs of our spirit home are always joyful, that tears of sorrow are removed. The mountains of beauty are around me, but I lie in the valley of peace and content, ere I take to myself the wings of the morning.' . . . A week or so later on, papa writes: 'My home is in the lovely valley of peace of which I told you.

Our precious ones are with me, and I have seen all whom we loved and lost on earth! They are the same; but old age is re-placed by the beauty of youth, health, and ever-abiding love.' . . . 'We sit and talk of our earthly days, reviewing them, even as you on earth may talk of, and anticipate your spirit home! I have many books which I am reading, and the Æolian harp is in the air around me, mingling with the sweet singing of the pretty birds, and the reviving, spirit-strengthening scent from the surrounding flowers and foliage.'"* Mrs. Clair paused.

"How real it sounds," remarked Bob, with a sigh. "It makes me long to go to dear mamma, rather than that she should return to me!"

"'I have many things to tell you, but you cannot bear them now,'" quoted father, and continuing, "We may reasonably suppose that these words of our Lord never cease to be applicable, whatever advances we may make in knowledge and experience of divine love and wisdom. For although we have never been without communications from the other world, as is testified in all ancient records—whether Christian, or Jewish, or Gentile—still, it is only of recent years that the influx of medial power has become so great; being simultaneously poured over the whole world, and thus revealing more of the

* See "Heaven Opened."

conditions of spirit life, in all its phases, than was ever known before."

"Christ also says, 'In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you, for if it were not so I would have told you,'—words," said Mrs. Clair, "full of grand suggestions—outlines to be filled in, and shaded by subsequent illumination. Such references in the Scriptures, to Heaven, or the spirit land, although somewhat rare and indefinite, distinctly indicate conditions of life corresponding to those we lead here, but infinitely more diversified, because exactly corresponding to the state of all varieties of character. It is true, that in teaching spiritual things, symbolism must be used (such as my papa's use of the term, 'Valley of Peace,' &c.), and *earthly terms*, as we have no other. But, even as we on earth can find no adequate expression to correspond to our own feelings of delight, in the beauties of exquisite scenery—so in a far greater degree must be the difficulty for our spirit friends to describe to us, the surroundings of their glorious spirit world."

Said father, as Mrs. Clair ceased speaking, and pointing towards the lovely moon-lit landscape lying around us, "Look! what *words* suffice to tell of *this* grand scene? We say, 'How exquisite!' 'How lovely!' and then can but gaze silently, and out of the secret recesses of our hearts sing in gratitude to the *Giver* of all such good."

Said Elfie, "The spirit-land seems to me very much like what this earth might be, if all kinds of evil were removed."

"For that very reason," replied Mrs. Clair, "many good people are repelled from Spiritualist teachings. They look upon it as profanity to picture heaven in any way but as that most vague and indefinite place where angels stand with folded wings, singing hymns perpetually. Oh! how I dreaded the 'everlasting Sabbath' I was told I should have to '*rejoice*' in when I got to heaven. I did indeed feel to be 'far from the kingdom,' and had, what I feared was a most wicked hope, that I might be *kept* far from it, for a very long time."

"Don't you remember, Jenny," said Bob, "how we hoped your dream of heaven was true,* and how we feared it could not be, because the children were playing about, and seemed so happy. It is very delightful to find that we shall *not* be so very different, only always good and happy, and above all things I am so very glad to know dear mamma is living in a beautiful place, where we shall go to be with her some day."

"Eva says we must pray always, and try to live a pure, holy life on earth; if we do not do so, we cannot go directly to the beautiful home she tells us about," said Elfie.

* See "The Dream" in "Bob and I."

"But where *should* we go to then?" I asked.

"Every spirit, on leaving its body, goes to the sphere of spirit life with which it is in harmony," answered Mrs. Clair. "When infants and young, innocent children pass away, we are told that they are taken at once to the 'gardens of the Lord,' set apart especially for them, where hosts of spirits find congenial and helpful occupation in training them. This children's sphere Eva tells us, is about on the same plane, and corresponding with, the third sphere of spirit life. I have little doubt, dear Jenny, but what you did catch a glimpse of these 'gardens,' when you had that very lovely dream, which has evidently made a life-long impression upon you. Thank the Father for His lovingkindness in thus opening your spiritual sight, even if for so short a time."

The clock struck nine; and a neat, bright-looking parlourmaid entered the room carrying a tray laden with sandwiches, fruit, and wine.

"How rapidly time flies!" remarked father. "I had no idea it was so late!"

"Mother won't mind," I said. "Brother Smorlbrane and his wife are spending the evening with her, and they are sure to finish up with a long prayer. Do, dear Mrs. Clair, please let us have just one more song, in which we can all join." I ran up to her, and taking her hand, drew her to the piano.

"Elfie dear, bring me Pope's ode, 'Vital Spark of

Heavenly Flame,'” asked Mrs. Clair. “Is it not one of the most exquisite compositions in the English language?”

“Indeed it is,” replied father, “and one most suited for us to conclude our most pleasant and, I will say, instructive evening with.”





CHAPTER VI.

"READ OUT."

IT was certainly a very strange coincidence, but on the very Sunday morning that my father was "*read out*" from the community of holy people assembling at "Little Bethel," Mr. Fisher, one of father's friends, was present.

His astonishment was extreme, when, after a solemn silence that had lasted for some minutes, one of the Brethren arose, and in a clear, loud voice said: "My brethren, I have a painful duty to perform. After much consideration, many prayers, and frequent exhortations with one who has for many years been in the habit of communicating with us at the table, we feel it incumbent upon us to 'read him—James Greatheart—out'—as one who, having yielded himself up to the doctrine of devils, and departed from the path of holiness, is no longer worthy of sitting at the Lord's Table."

"What name was that just given as 'read out'?" asked Mr. Fisher, in an undertone, to the worshipper sitting by his side.

"James Greatheart," was the reply; "and may the Lord have mercy on his soul, and lead him back to His fold, before it is too late! Amen, and Amen."

Mr. Fisher heard no more of the service; his thoughts were otherwise occupied. As he was walking out of the chapel he met with Brother Smorlbrane. Being slightly acquainted with him, through some business transactions, he went up to him.

"Mr. Smorlbrane," said he, "may I ask what 'James Greatheart' it is who is lying under the ban of your righteous indignation, and who has been what you call 'read out' from your community?"

"Ah!" replied Brother Smorlbrane, with a deep sigh and a solemn shake of the head, "it is James Greatheart, of Blake's Bank. 'Tis very sad, but he has been a source of great anxiety and sorrow to us for a long time."

"James Greatheart, of Blake's Bank, dismissed as unworthy of sitting at the Lord's Table!" exclaimed Mr. Fisher. "What denomination of Christians, or folks calling themselves Christians, can Little Bethel belong to? Why, I have known James Greatheart for years, and always looked upon him as one of the holiest men I ever knew! I would have declared that if the world held but one true follower of Christ, James Greatheart was that one! Upright in character, exemplary in daily life,—it would be simply impossible for him to yield to any doctrine of devils, or be otherwise than pure and good in all ways. I do

not make any profession of religion myself, and have never thought very much about such matters, but there is no man I know, who has done me more good than Mr. Greatheart; and I never leave his presence but what I think, I hope, before I die, I may become as good a man as he is. There's no fear but what *he* will go to heaven, for he seems to live there already."

Brother Smorlbrane looked cautiously around; then, placing his hand upon Mr. Fisher's arm, drew him aside from the people who were flocking out of the chapel and forming little groups, talking of the "reading out" that had just occurred. Said Brother Smorlbrane, in an undertone: "Friend Fisher, James Greatheart has fallen! He no longer believes in a God of wrath! He thinks that God is only a God of love!" Mr. Fisher started, and was about to speak, but Brother Smorlbrane held up his finger to stop him, and went on: "We know God is a God of love to the elect; but it behoves us to remember also that He is a God of justice, and, to the unbeliever, a God of wrath. Now, James Greatheart actually tries to teach that dreadful doctrine called '*the restitution of all things*,' and something about '*progressive spirit-life*.' Most dangerous heresies, which will bring spiritual destruction to thousands!"

"Not to the elect, surely," quietly observed Mr. Fisher, and, as Mr. Smorlbrane was looking up, about to reply, added, "I'll not detain you longer now,

Mr. Smorlbrane. I must go and see my friend Greatheart this evening, and hear what he has to say upon the subject. But, if I remember rightly, one of Christ's disciples proving false, betrayed Him; and yet, so far from 'reading him out' or dismissing him from His table, He dipped a sop into the wine, and handed it to him Himself! Are you quite sure that, even supposing your ideas respecting James Greatheart are correct, you are following in your Master's steps by acting as you are now doing? Good morning."

Raising his hat, Mr. Fisher walked rapidly away, leaving Brother Smorlbrane looking after him with a not very lucid expression upon his countenance.

Bob and I went for a long walk that Sunday afternoon, and, on our return, found Mr. Fisher with father. Mr. Rivers also popped in before I had had time to take my hat off. Mother was just getting tea ready, and insisted upon all the friends joining us at that meal.

It was not her habit to encourage Sunday visitors, but I believe she was more upset than she would ever acknowledge to us, (or even to herself) by the step the Brethren had taken towards father, and was glad of the little diversion thus unexpectedly offered.

"Mr. Greatheart," said Mr. Fisher, "for the first time in my life I was at Little Bethel this morning. I went accidentally, having been to call upon a sick friend who lives near the chapel. Seeing the people

just going in to service, thinks I to myself, I wonder what kind of gospel-shop we have here!" Mother looked unutterably shocked at the expression "gospel-shop," and I must say I thought it sounded very ugly myself. "So I went in," continued Mr. Fisher. "You can never imagine my surprise when I heard *you*—James Greatheart—were 'read out' for some kind of heresy." He then narrated to us all that had transpired, and the account of which I have just given.

"Now," said he, "to tell you the truth, my curiosity is aroused. I have always looked upon the majority of religious people as very tiresome, and rather stupid, and thought I never could get on with any of them; and yet I certainly do not feel satisfied with the sort of life I am myself leading. Perhaps, after all, you can help me. For if you are 'read out' from the religious people, you, whom I always feel to be as good and true a man as ever lived, surely *I* may find what my soul is seeking after, in the heresy that seems to have separated you from the very class of religionists who have always repelled me."

"Read out *at last*!" exclaimed Mr. Rivers. "Well, my dear Mr. Greatheart, I only wonder you have not been dismissed from Little Bethel long ago. Now I hope we shall have you with us at St. Luke's."

"But if our friend is turned away from Little Bethel, will he be admitted as a member at St. Luke's?" exclaimed Mr. Fisher.

“My dear friend,” said father, “although the Brethren assembled in Close-lane have seen it to be their duty to dismiss me from their fellowship, this by no means prevents me from joining some other body of Christians. You must on no account judge the true religion of Christ by one single act committed by professing Christians. The strictest professor of Christianity is, unhappily, not necessarily the truest follower of Christ! One of the greatest evils of sectarianism is the spirit of bigotry it usually engenders. In the anxiety to teach certain dogmas, and to draw up what may be called ‘Articles of Faith,’ the fact is too often overlooked that our *first* duty is to be like *Christ*—to follow in *His* steps; to receive Him as our Saviour and Example; to cultivate His spirit of love; and then let each one assimilate to himself that special aspect of truth which corresponds to his own spiritual wants and nature. We cannot all think alike. Truth presents itself in a different aspect to each mind, and it is worse than useless to endeavour to force a certain set of dogmas upon every one alike. That wonderful thinker, Margaret Fuller Ossoli, wrote wisely that, ‘Each new child is a new thought, and has bearings and discernings which the thoughts older in date know not yet, but must learn!’

“I am inclined to think I ought to have withdrawn myself from membership at Little Bethel,” continued father, “and thereby saved these good

men from committing the mistake of 'reading' me out. It is likely to do more harm to them than ever it can do to me."

"Then you are not distressed by the decision of the Brethren?" remarked Mr. Fisher.

"Why, no," answered father, "I cannot say I am. It is not possible for them to separate me from Jesus! *He* will always be at once my Brother and my Lord—my everlasting Guide."

Mr. Rivers here turned towards Mr. Fisher, saying, "The step taken by the Brethren will not bring the slightest discredit upon our friend Mr. Great-heart in this town; he is too well known. But—" and here he addressed father—"surely 'tis not true that this same ceremony of reading you out is performed simultaneously in all the assemblies of the Howlers throughout England?"

"It is quite true," replied father quietly.

"Then," exclaimed Mr. Rivers, rising from his chair in an excited manner and walking to the window, "it is a most unjustifiable practice! I am sure if *I* was treated thus I would bring an action for libel against the whole lot of Howlers and Smorlbranes!"

"That reminds me," said Mr. Fisher, "that I have seen some such cases in the paper recently"—but mother just now called us into the little parlour to tea, so the current of conversation was averted.

The excitement that had recently arisen in the

town upon the subject of Spiritualism was discussed. Mr. Rivers related some interesting events which had taken place at his house, during Miss Joy's visit.

As we were leaving the tea-table to return to the front parlour Mr. Fisher suddenly remarked, "By the way, Mr. Greatheart, what about this doctrine of devils the Brethren declare you have yielded yourself up to? Do they mean Spiritualism?"

"Well, I certainly believe that my interest in the subject has brought matters to a crisis; but, in truth, we differ upon several points. One great barrier between us is my firm belief, in what is called the 'final restitution of all things.'"

"It appears very strange to me," remarked Mr. Rivers, "that all Christians do not gladly welcome the delightful hope, which such a belief must inspire in the heart of all men. Why, the terrible, godless notions of 'Eternal Torment,' 'Everlasting Punishment,' 'Unpardonable Sin,' and such teachings, would be removed at once if this doctrine became universal. And, with the removal of all these ideas, there would be far fewer cases of religious insanity; whilst the true spirit of religion, once freed from such damaging influences, would take far deeper root in the minds of thousands of earnest truth-seekers, who are (naturally, I think), repelled from believing in a God who is supposed to be capable of inflicting such cruel treatment upon His own children."

Said Mr. Fisher, after a pause of some minutes :
“The mystery of evil has been a great stumbling-block in my way for years ; but it was the terrors of hell and fears of an angry God, which brought almost unmitigated misery into my childish days. Parents or guardians, often appear to forget their own childhood, or surely they would be more tender in their treatment of the little ones ! My dear parents, I am sure, acted up to their principles, but so continually did they hold up to me the dreadful consequences of being naughty, that I remember feeling, at times, *crushed* by a dread of the God whom I was, at the same time, told I must love. I remember I distressed my own poor mother terribly. One day I had told a fib ; and, on being found out, was of course severely and properly reprimanded. After the punishment had been carried out, my mother took me on her knee, talked to me in her own loving way, expressed her great sorrow at my wickedness, and told me how very angry God would be ! Thinking to comfort her, I remarked, ‘Mother dear, God doesn’t know, for I spoke in a whisper, so that He should not hear me.’ ‘Ah, my dear child,’ she answered, ‘you can hide nothing from God ! He sees your secret thoughts, and knows all your actions ; whether you speak aloud, in a whisper, or even if you only *think* any naughty thing, it is all the same to Him !’ ‘Oh, dear ! oh, dear !’ I cried, trembling from

head to foot with strong excitement and overwhelming trouble, ‘how I do *wish* I could get out of God’s reach! I *cannot love* Him if He is so strict; then of course I shall go to hell for ever and ever.’ Starting out of my mother’s arms, I threw myself on to the floor, exclaiming, ‘Oh, why *did* God make me if He knew I should be so wicked, and *have* to go to hell?’ Poor, dear mother! she tried to bring comfort by assuring me that God would love me if I was a good boy; but the mischief was done. As I grew up, and became old enough to reason, my heart hardened. When I left home I ceased attending any place of worship. Feeling out of sympathy with every form of religion which had come before my notice, I had no motive for restraining my own will, and plunged into all kinds of wild dissipations.”

Mr. Fisher ceased speaking, and sat looking thoughtfully before him. We all remained silent, until father, rising from his seat, and placing his hand upon Mr. Fisher’s shoulder, quietly said, “And you found yourself even more unhappy than you were before, did you not?”

“*Oh, indeed I did!*” replied Mr. Fisher, with deep emotion. “In my very heart I have always felt a great want. Religion has failed me. The enjoyments of life have palled upon me. Often do I ask—‘Is life worth living?’ But, my dear friend Great-heart,” Mr. Fisher continued, with increasing earnestness, “I am sure you are the one to help me.

Often have I thought so, but *now*, from our most interesting conversation this evening, I am convinced of it. I am really sorry that an important engagement I have to fulfil by half-past eight, compels me to leave you now. Let me come in soon again, and have some further talk. I am longing to know more about the 'restitution of all things.'"

"Friend Fisher," replied father, cordially shaking hands with him, "I shall be delighted to see and converse with you at any time. Be sure that in helping you, I am myself a gainer."

Mr. Rivers and Bob put on their hats ready to accompany Mr. Fisher, as they were going in the same direction.

Lingering by the garden gate as we watched their receding forms, dear father remarked, "Jenny, we will pray for our friend that he may receive the help he needs."

Said mother, who had been a silent listener during the latter part of the evening's conversation, "I always looked upon Mr. Fisher as a worldly-minded man. I did not know, and should never have thought, he had had the advantages of a pious mother."

Father made no reply, but as we walked up the garden quietly repeated to himself :

"Not now, for I have wanderers in the distance,
And thou must call them in with patient love.
Not now, for I have sheep upon the mountain,
And thou must follow them where'er they rove."



CHAPTER VII.

FURORE!

THE one topic of general interest in our little town now, was Spiritualism. Tabooed as it had always been, and only mentioned with bated breath by those very few people who were more daring than the majority, when it became known that my father had been "read out" from Little Bethel community, because of his belief in Spiritualism—why, it was like setting a match to a train of gunpowder. Instead of subdued whisperings, we only heard loud expressions of interest, and the bated breath was exchanged for boldly-uttered resolves to look into this strange subject.

If James Greatheart, of "Blake's Bank," had joined the ranks of Spiritualism—James Greatheart, who had for years been respected and beloved by every one—James Greatheart, who had been looked up to with reverence, as a model of Christian

integrity by all who knew him—well, if *he* was a Spiritualist, at least there must be some great good in it, in spite of the jeers of the newspapers, and the holy (or unholy?) indignation of the zealots of Little Bethel, who loudly denounced Spiritualism to be “all of the devil.” Has not every new development of thought, from the earliest ages, met with a similar reception, and been pronounced devilish?

In fact, some daring spirit (I won't say who) *in the flesh*, (for this distinction was beginning to be made) was rash enough at this time to publish a little *brochure*, in which he really *proved* what a very useful member of society Satan had been throughout all ages, and how—if popular opinion might be taken as decisive—the very best ideas, philosophical, scientific, medical, or religious, had all originated in his Satanic majesty's most useful and fertile brain.

Such a *furor* had this pamphlet produced in all the religious communities, that I am not sure whether some of them, did not feel it their bounden duty to follow in the wake of the Little Bethelites. And *they* actually had a tea-fight over it; after which a few of the leaders met in solemn conclave, and burnt the offending *brochure*; attaching to it, before doing so, the effigy of the bold blasphemer who had constituted himself an apologist for the devil!

Bob and I were in ecstasies! There was certainly a kind of pleasure connected with the feeling of

importance we shared, in finding ourselves residents in a town which had suddenly risen, from uninteresting obscurity, to—as we imagined—world-wide notoriety. We judged this from the fact that some accounts of the fierce conflict between the Spiritualists and the anti-Spiritualists, (the latter being strongly represented by the Little Bethelites, and other evangelicals of the neighbourhood) which had recently taken place in the town, had found their way into some of the London papers.

Then various meetings were being held at the Town Hall, and lectures upon the vexed subject given two or three times a week, by some great men (as we thought) from London.

Mr. Edward Rish, a cousin of Alfred's (Lilly's husband), was among the most distinguished lecturers in favour of Spiritualism ; whilst a man named Cum-Bishop, or something like that, kept up the agitation by blazing advertisements of his power of "exposing Spiritualism." We had to pay a trifle for admittance to see this so-called *exposé*, but the lectures of the true Spiritualists were given free. Father and Mr. Fisher declared that the *exposés* were more useful to the cause than some of the propagandist efforts employed by the Spiritualists themselves. Alas ! who has not at times had reason to exclaim, "Save me from my friends" ?

But I will not dilate further upon these wild excitements, so-called *exposés*, &c., &c. We look back

upon those days with deep gratitude and unceasing delight. Beyond the decidedly healthy excitement which was caused by the grand *furor* (grand to us in comparison to the torpid condition we had for long been enduring, with the rest of the inhabitants of our little country town), Bob and I had the far more elevating delight of realizing how this beautiful, but much-misrepresented belief, had thrown open the spiritual gates, which had hitherto been but "ajar;" feeling almost as if "heaven" had "opened" to our view. For could we not catch glimpses of our loved ones, and occasionally hear far-off echoes from the spirit-home? Thus were our daily lives hallowed, and our small daily duties ennobled.

Mr. Fisher, who was making a somewhat long stay in the town, entered into the *furor* with great interest. He was a frequent visitor, not only at our cottage, where he and father would talk for hours upon all kinds of subjects, principally religious, but also at Mr. Rivers'. (This was when he first became acquainted with Maggie, who is now his devoted little wife.)

We all of us went to some of the lectures. I took notes of those delivered by Mr. Edward Rish, and will here give one or two extracts.

One interesting feature at these meetings was the discussion that usually followed, after the lecture was over. On one occasion questions had been put, as to "What power evil spirits had?"

The reply was :

"We have warned you many times that you have no security in dealing with unprogressed spirits. . . . It is needful that our friends should realise that such exist, and be on their guard. When the faculty of discerning spirits, of which one of your sacred writers spake, is developed, you will not need to be told of this. We can by no means see how any evidence that is serviceable, is affected by this information. . . . We deal with what *is*, not what you may fancy *ought* to be." *

On another occasion the question was put : "Can you tell me the perceptible result of Spiritualism ?"

The reply was :

"Spiritualism has been given in the usual wave-like way, receding and advancing, from the very earliest ages. But with each advancing wave fresh power has been gained, fresh advance made. Swedenborg was the forerunner of the present strong advancing wave which is sweeping before it the materialism of the scientific world. The perceptible result you would know of, I cannot show you, as it is more a general, and above all, an underlying current of strong effects. That is the result as yet perceptible to the spirit world, more than to your varied individualities. The final result will be, that the wave of spiritual power will overpower the whole

* From "Spirit Teachings," given through *M.A. Oxon.*

world to its remotest corner. And when, by its power, the existing evils shall have been exposed, and then subdued, shall God's kingdom be on earth even as it is in heaven. The rise and fall of nations will not again be as complete in their ruin, or receding wave of prosperity, as in the olden times; but equality shall be established through Christ's reign on earth, and all nations shall be as one. This must be the result of the universal spirit of love that will then spread over all, with its healing powers. Each shall love his neighbour more than himself. Strife, jealousy, and ambition to 'live above each other, will be done away with."

Said Mr. Fisher to father one evening, when they were, as usual, speaking of these matters, "Of all the teachings of Spiritualism, I really think that of progressive spirit-life is the most helpful, in all ways. And after all, *what is it* but the doctrine of the 'restitution of all things,' which is now being taught by some of our most eminent Christian men; and preached not only from pulpits, but earnestly discussed in our leading religious papers, and thus, through the press, reaching to the remotest parts of the world?"

"And yet," replied father, "vast numbers of good men and women who gladly receive this 'Eternal Hope,' turn obstinately from Spiritualism. They know not what they do; for certainly, if we believe in the 'restitution of all things,' we must of necessity

believe in the recovery after death of those who leave this world in a 'lost' or 'unsaved' condition, as well as in the eternal progress of those whose holy living begins here."

"You see," observed Mr. Fisher, earnestly, "it gives a fellow a chance." (Mother looked rather shocked, although she was, I believe, getting to understand that, beneath an occasionally irreverent manner or expression, Mr. Fisher was becoming more and more desirous of turning from the frivolities of a worldly life, and gaining an earnestness which he himself hardly liked to avow.) "And it is certainly a fact that the vast majority of human beings live on this earth, surrounded by circumstances over which they have had no control, but which must preclude every hope of salvation for them, if they are to be judged by my dear mother's old orthodox ideas! Ah! she knows better now, and is all the happier for it, I am sure, even in heaven. The notion that death seals every man's doom, so that all who die good, go on advancing in goodness for ever, and all who die evil, go on adding everlastingly to their wickedness, and consequently accumulating fresh reasons for continued punishment, is terribly dishonouring to God, and out of harmony with all that we most assuredly believe, of the perfection, goodness, and infinite love of the Universal Father! Thank God! Spiritualism shows us all a way of escape from this most genuine and literal 'doctrine

of devils,' and is leading many, out of the maze of infidelity, into the vivifying and glorious belief in Christ, as 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life!'"

Here mother remarked, "I am afraid if these dangerous doctrines—as I can but consider them—become widely known, wickedness will spread more than ever. What check will there be, if people get to believe that they can mend their ways after death, as well as before they die? We should have fewer conversions than ever!"

Father replied, "My dear Jane, any conversions brought about merely from a dread of hell, or of punishment for wrong-doing, are, we may be sure, valueless in the sight of God. Not only must we abstain from outward shapes of evil, but we must resist and renounce the far more subtle essences and principles of evil in our own hearts, before we can hope to be fitted to live in the higher spheres of angel life. Now, as our friend Fisher was observing, it is a fact, that the majority of men living upon this earth are, from birth, surrounded by circumstances over which they have had no control, and which are entirely adverse, not only to what you may call 'religious life,' but unhappily, *also*, to ordinary common morality. Comparatively few ever even hear the name of Christ!"

"'Tis their own fault," muttered mother; "living in a Christian country, too!"

Father continued, "Millions live and die pagans, heathens, even in so-called Christian countries! Their latent spiritual life being undeveloped, they know nothing of Christ's work, or of the Christian's God! They live and die without aspiration, without any inner life of faith and worship. Are we to suppose that our Heavenly Father, who causes the rain to fall, and the sun to shine, alike on the evil and the good, has different laws for governing His earthly children in their varied stages of progression? I think *not*, but have never yet found this difficulty so well overcome, as by the spiritualistic teaching of the 'sphere of undevelopment.'"

Said Mr. Fisher, when father ceased speaking, "Do you not think we have Scriptural reference to this state, in the 'Hades' or 'Paradise' spoken of in several instances? Then also, Christ goes to 'preach to spirits in prison,' thus clearly showing that His work continues in the spirit land."

"Yes," replied father, "although revelation is remarkably reticent about the details of a future life, there are many pregnant hints scattered through the sacred pages, which lead us to think of a variety of gradations in the life of the world to come. And while we are encouraged to believe that the evangelical work of rescuing fallen souls from evil will be carried on, even more completely, by the teachers and preachers of righteousness, in that blessed life, we are also able to look forward to a time when this

great but still pathetic work shall cease, because the great Divine harvest of salvation shall be all gathered in. All souls shall bow the knee to Jesus. When this great work is accomplished the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, and He shall be All in All! But what incalculable steps of advancement must be passed over before this final consummation is attained! Depend upon it, there is no stagnation in heaven. There is no break of continuity in the ladder that leads from the lowest places on earth to the loftiest summits of the skies!"





CHAPTER VIII.

"PASSING ON."

WHAT with Lilly's marriage in the early part of this year, and dear Mrs. Rivers' removal soon after, the old home was sadly changed for Mr. Rivers, Maggie, and Bob. We saw a great deal of each other; mother declared that I might as well take up my abode with them entirely, she had so little of my company, especially when the holidays began. I remember one evening particularly about that time. We had quite a little party at the Rivers' house. Mrs. Clair and Elfie had been with Maggie, Bob, and me, for a lovely walk out into the country—over the common, to see some poor people; and on our return she consented to spend the evening with us. Mr. Rivers called in at the Bank to ask father to join us at an early hour if he could arrange to do so. "Well, friend Rivers," said father, "may I bring Mr. Fisher? he is intending to spend the evening at my house, but if agreeable we can come together

to yours, instead." This *was* very acceptable; and I think I may say, especially so to Maggie! It was a lovely day, and we were so hot after our walk, that Maggie arranged for us to have tea in the garden, under the large mulberry-tree. Although Mr. Rivers' house stood in the High Street of our small town, the scenery behind was extensive, and as picturesque as any part of the rustic county in which we lived. We assembled by six o'clock, lingered over the tea-table and on the lawn discussing some ordinary topics, until the shades of evening brought a chilliness into the air, sending us back into the drawing-room. A life-size oil-painting of dear Mrs. Rivers was hanging over the piano. We all went up to look closely at it.

Said Mrs. Clair, "How you must all value this beautiful picture! What a lovely expression of countenance! Those eyes look to me as if they saw beyond the earthly spheres; there is a longing, wistful gaze, such as we often find in those who live, as we may say, 'on the Border Land!'"

"Our friend who took this portrait," remarked Mr. Rivers, "has caught my dear wife's happiest expression. That far-away look which you noticed was peculiar to her, but became intensified to a remarkable degree during the last few months of her illness."

"Much as we grieve to lose her," observed Maggie, "we could not wish her back! It has been

an inestimable privilege for us all, to have witnessed such a glorious 'passing on' as that of our darling mamma. For months had her gentle spirit been ripening for glory. Her room was truly like the gate of heaven; not only did she seem to catch glimpses of the spirit land, but on several occasions assured us, that she heard the voices of angels singing near, or with her."

"The last time I had the happiness of spending an hour with your mamma, dear Maggie," said father, "she expressed much gratitude for the brightness which had come into her life, since our conversations at Hastings, when she was first enabled to receive the literal truth of the 'communion of saints,' or angels. For the reception of this truth the actual knowledge of modern Spiritualism is not necessary; because all truly earnest Christians have beliefs and experiences which lie at its very basis. What stronger or more beautiful proofs of the presence of our guardian spirits, could have been given to any one, than such as your mamma had throughout her illness? And such cases have been constantly recurring since the world began."

"Would you mind relating some of these experiences to me," asked Mrs. Clair of Mr. Rivers, "or is it too trying to dwell upon them at present?"

"On the contrary," he replied, "it is soothing to recall those beautiful details. They seem to bring her to us again. I remember so well one morning

when I went in to see her, some months ago: she greeted me with her usual bright smile, and said, 'I'm not going yet, dear.'

" 'How do you know?' I asked, for she had been so much worse, that we all thought her rapidly sinking.

" 'I have just seen my brother,' she replied; 'he tells me I am not going to them yet; I have a little more work to do here first!'

" 'With a slight sigh she added, 'No doubt it is true; "they also serve who only stand and wait." I seem so long lingering at the gates!'

" 'Is it not loving of our Father,' I said to her, 'to leave the gates ajar, to give us some glimpses of the spirit home?'

" 'Ah, yes, indeed!' she replied. 'Listen! even now I hear the echo as of a thousand angel voices!'

" 'Her countenance was radiant; I felt as though I was standing on hallowed ground.'

" 'Was it not that same day, father,' asked Maggie, 'when mamma had the vision of her children and parents?'

" 'I believe it was, Maggie dear. You and I were sitting together quietly reading, thinking your mamma was asleep, when suddenly she exclaimed, 'Look! Look! How glorious!' and pointing to the foot of her bed she continued, 'Yes! 'tis true! There is my own dear mother! life-like as when I was a child! She is beckoning to me—I'm coming! I'm coming!' After a moment she con-

tinued, 'Dear father now is standing by her side And there! I see all my darlings! One—two—three! All there—waiting for me. And over them I see Jesus. His blessing rests upon us all.' She closed her eyes, as if musing on what she had seen, and then added, 'Is this a glimpse of heaven? Thank God for His infinite love.' "

"Was your dear wife conscious to the last?" asked Mrs. Clair.

"We judge so," Mr. Rivers replied; "but we could not mark the moment when she finally became too absorbed in the spiritual, to recognise her material surroundings.

"On the morning of the day she left us we all assembled in her room. She requested us to join in singing one of her favourite hymns—'Vital spark of heavenly flame.' As we came to the words—

" 'The world recedes, it disappears,
Heaven opens on mine eyes, mine ears
With sounds seraphic ring,'

she started up; we paused in astonishment. Holding up her finger, 'Hush! hush!' she whispered, 'they come nearer, nearer! I hear words! Let us listen! Thousands of voices are singing! they say—

" "Sister, rejoice! for thou soon shalt see
The glories of immortality!
Sister, rejoice! and look on high!
The home of thy spirit! where nought can die."

“ ‘A bright crown awaits thee! A robe of pure white!
A home full of loved ones, all radiant in light!
A home, where thy spirit will find the glad rest,
The freedom, the joy, prepared for the blest!’ ”

“ ‘Ah! my darlings,’ she exclaimed, ‘what joy!’
—in a few minutes she added, ‘Ah! now the music
is receding—it dies upon the air! fainter and fainter
grow those heavenly echoes. . . . It is over
now,’ she whispered, and as she lay back upon her
pillows, we could almost believe we really heard a
sound as of ‘the rustling of angels’ wings.’ Towards
evening she appeared to be holding conversations
with her spirit friends, addressing them by name.
We could hear her asking questions, and then, as it
seemed to us, waiting for them to be answered.
Once we overheard her—‘You tell me that is Jesus,
the Author and Finisher of my faith! How He
draws me to Him! what heavenly love beams from
His Divine countenance!’ In a few minutes she
added, ‘Is this dying? How glorious! Is *this* the
Valley of the Shadow of Death? Christ lights it
up! I see yonder those Heavenly Hills!’ She lay
still, with closed eyes and failing breath. No
struggle, but just gently ‘PASSING ON.’ A sudden
lighting up of her countenance,—we leaned
over her to catch the whispered, faltering words,
‘Jesus is come! His arms are beneath me. I’m
ready—Jesus, take me home!’ And so He took
her.”

A deep stillness reigned in the room when Mr. Rivers finished speaking, broken only by the low sounds of almost silent weeping, for we were all overcome. Then Mrs. Clair said :

"How strange it is, we weep and yet rejoice ! But even as our Lord 'groaned in anguish' and 'wept bitterly' at the grave of Lazarus, whilst knowing that one word from His lips would restore him to life by His side, so our tears may be shed and our hearts be well-nigh broken, although we know that the objects of our grief are inexpressibly blessed, and that a few short days will re-unite them to us."

"'Tis true," observed Mr. Rivers, "irrepressible tears must flow when at first the great separation which death brings, visits our homes. No vision of the higher land can entirely quench them, however much it may allay their bitterness. For we do feel that our dear ones are gone away, that our close converse with them is, to a great extent, broken, and can only be resumed when the same change arrives for us."

Said father, when Mr. Rivers ceased speaking :
"How beautifully and fully does Tennyson grasp this experience in his words :

" 'Nor blame I death because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth.
I know transplanted human worth
Can bloom to profit elsewhere.

““ For this alone on death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart :
He put our lives so far apart,
We cannot hear each other speak.’ ”

“ I thought Spiritualists must lose all this feeling of utter loss and desolation,” Mr. Fisher remarked ; “ but, after all, nature must give way, under every fresh bereavement.”

“ I know when our dear Eva was taken from us,” replied Mrs. Clair, “ we did feel, the blank occasioned by the removal of her bodily presence, would never be filled up. I rejoice to say that our spiritualistic experiences have so far filled that blank, that I *do* feel I could not wish her back ; even if one word from me would restore her to us as of old, I would not utter it. But with every fresh removal we do, undoubtedly, go through the bitterness of a sense of loss. Our loved ones are on a different plane to what we are, and I would not have it otherwise. That good man, Elihu Rich, in a letter written to a dear friend, says, ‘ What God takes from us, it is always gain to lose. He gives back to us our friends more deeply, more tenderly, more sacredly, after they have been taken from us by death. The intimacy *before* death pertains more to the flesh and its senses ; after death it pertains more to the spirit and its inmost affections. . . . They visit us only in our holiest moments. They act upon us, therefore, as motives to prayer, watchfulness, and retirement

of spirit. As the Lord before His death was *with* His friends, but afterwards *in* them, so our holiest friends help us more, when they put off flesh, and are no more seen.' "

"That," exclaimed father, "is an exquisite utterance, and one which must be echoed by every Christian Spiritualist. But it evidently only applies to the removal of our 'holy' friends; they who having whilst on earth lived in the Christ-sphere, are taken immediately *to* that sphere."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mrs. Clair. "And on the other hand, what a vast arcana of undeveloped, and different lower spheres, open up to us in the investigation of Spiritualism! I will acknowledge that this is a phase I should not care to become familiar with, and on no account would I have Elfie (or any young persons) enter upon it. Still it exists."

"But," observed Maggie, "with your dear Elfie's powerful mediumship, and such helpful communications as you so frequently receive from your own dear ones, dwelling, as we believe, in the higher spheres of spirit-life, surely Spiritualism *does* break down the barrier raised by death, to a far greater extent than to most people?"

"No doubt it does, dear Maggie," answered Mrs. Clair. "I am sure we *do* rejoice unspeakably in the gift bestowed upon us, in our home life. But still, 'tis 'only as through a glass darkly,' as our spirit friends themselves say. When least expected,

we have unmistakable tests of the close presence of our loved ones, and feel indeed they are by our side. But then months may pass and no sign be given. I think every fresh arrival in the spirit-land, of those we loved on earth, brings a fresh, strong, *rapport*, which may keep on uninterruptedly for months. It was so with us when Eva first went; dear Elsie received messages, or some token of her spirit-sister's presence, daily for a long time. Then it all suddenly ceased, and has not returned, to the same degree. Still, the power has never left us, I am thankful to say."

"Can you explain this uncertainty about mediumships?" asked Mr. Fisher.

"No, indeed!" Mrs. Clair replied. "We have yet to learn the laws which govern these gifts. We only know, that reliable medial power, depends upon the most delicate conditions. But *what* these conditions are we know very little. A slight indisposition, over-fatigue, or any undue excitement, and the power is either *nil*, or liable to be intruded upon by some adverse spirit, thus bringing deception and extreme bewilderment. The presence of one person who is antagonistic to the medium, will often suffice to repress the power entirely."

The church clock struck ten, and the servant coming in with a tray of refreshment, put an abrupt stop to the conversation; which was not resumed.

After we had partaken of supper, I begged Elfie to sing what we had named "Our Spirit Song," because the words had been given inspirationally to Mrs. Clair soon after Eva's removal. The music had, in the same way, been given to Elfie one evening, when she was, according to her frequent custom, playing the piano in the gloaming twilight hour.

He giveth His beloved rest !
 My child, sleep on ;
Safely reposing on thy Saviour's breast,
 My child, sleep on.
Fain would I clasp thee to thy mother's heart,
 My cherished one ;
Fain would I shield thee from death's fatal dart,
 Death's cold, sharp pang.
But thou art gone ; and as a jewel bright
 Dost deck the brow,
Of Him who claimed thee for His land of light,
 His home of joy.
'Tis but the casket fair o'er which I weep,
 As Jesus wept
Ere Lazarus from his deathlike sleep
 And dark grave leapt ;
Joyously bursting from death's trammels sad
 To life and love ;
So didst thy spirit rise, freely and glad,
 To its home above.
Be still, sad heart, be still !
 Oh, murmur not ;
Bow to thy Father's will,
 Accept thy lot !

Know, that whilst chastening
 He blesseth thee.
And as o'er life's path hastening,
 Let thy prayer be,
"Thy will, my God, Thy will
 Be ever done."
Let me un murmuringly be still,
 Nor shun
The loving hand that leads through deepest gloom
To the heavenly home where richest flowers bloom.*

* This poem and the spirit messages throughout this tale were all received through F. J. T.'s writing mediumship, with the exception of the one given through "M.A., Oxon." at page 73.





CHAPTER IX.

THROUGH DEATH—IS LIFE.

IT must, I think, have been about three weeks after our happy evening at the Rivers', when Mrs. Clair called in to have a little talk with Maggie, and suggested that she, with her father, and a few congenial friends, should meet regularly at her house to discuss the subject of Spiritualism in its varied phases.

Mr. Rivers was greatly pleased at the opportunity thus afforded him, of pursuing his inquiries; and be very sure, father was delighted to make one of the party.

Mrs. Clair especially invited Bob and me, as companions for Elfie, who, with her strong medial power, was, of course, to be present on every occasion.

Said Mrs. Clair, when speaking with father upon the subject, "Mr. Greatheart, I must say that I do not think it wise, as a rule, to bring children, or any

young people, too prominently forward in these matters. Mediumship frequently comes to them unsought, as it has done with my Elfie. Your Jenny, also, is what we call a sensitive ;—that is, one who is readily acted upon by unseen powers. Let us accept these medial gifts with gratitude ; but the more impressionable a child is, the more needful does it become to keep the surrounding influences pure and holy. Children seldom speak of their own experiences, doubtless because of the unbelief with which such experiences would be received, and they shrink from being accused of untruthfulness. Now I am sure that our little ones ought to be encouraged to speak of all they learn spiritually, in an open, natural way, and let it be accepted as such. By this means the power will neither be forced nor repressed ; and then we may be sure that our Father in heaven will lead us by the right path."

"It appears to me," replied father, "most desirable to cultivate our spiritual faculties to the utmost. Does not Paul say, 'Covet earnestly the best gifts' ; and also, in the 14th chapter of Corinthians, he repeats, 'Since ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may abound unto the edifying of the churches.' The more correct translation of this verse reads, 'Since ye are zealots of spirits.' So I think we can make no mistake as to his meaning."

"Quite true, dear friend," replied Mrs. Clair. "I indeed agree with you in wishing all good

Christians would follow these scriptural injunctions more literally; but from my experience in modern Spiritualism I am quite sure that there is great danger in the development of mediumship, where there is not already a well-regulated mind, pure motives, and high principles. This is the penalty we must as yet pay, for having so long ignored the supernatural. This present strong influx of Spiritualism, with its great development of medial power in every direction, has come as a powerful reaction against the dense wall of materialism, which was rapidly closing up every spiritual avenue. But, with this reaction, we find ourselves overwhelmed with spirit power of every kind and degree. The development of the medial gift, naturally lays the medium peculiarly open to all these influences,—bad, as well as good. Therefore, let us by all means train the religious side of our nature, before we seek for open communion with the spirit world. And in an especial manner let us guard our little ones from influences, which may as easily blend with their lighter, and more frivolous impulses, as with their graver, or more thoughtful elements of character.”

“I understand you, dear friend,” said father, “and can well see the need of a prayerful spirit, whilst entering upon the practical investigation of this grand subject.”

“You see,” continued Mrs. Clair, “Bob, Jenny, and my Elsie, have been somewhat exceptionally

favoured in opportunities which have opened up in their lives, bringing to them quite spontaneously the development of medial powers ; therefore I rejoice that they should be with us in our evening séances. The sphere of childhood is loving and soothing. We shall be all congenial ; no carping, critical spirit will be present to mar our efforts ; such would, indeed, be physically injurious to us all, and most of all to the children."

"We will meet in Christ's name," said father, in his beautiful, reverent manner, "and may His Spirit be in our midst ; then we need fear no foe."

"Amen," exclaimed Mrs. Clair, and for some minutes no word was spoken. Then Mrs. Clair rose to leave us, and father had to hasten back to the Bank. We had met in the Library, which was generally deserted between one and two o'clock in the day, or we should not have had this opportunity for introducing such a topic.

It was arranged for us to meet *en séance* every Tuesday evening by seven o'clock at Mrs. Clair's pretty little home. I shall never forget those beautiful, helpful hours. Bob and I kept a full account of all of them, and I will copy a few extracts from our "Spiritual Diary," as we call our interesting records of those séances.

We always began the evening with reading from the Bible and prayer. Ah ! how earnestly did my dear father beseech the blessing of our Lord to rest upon

us ; to send, in His own way, some of His ministering spirits to teach us of heavenly things ; *and his prayers were answered.*

It was at the very first séance we held, that dear Mrs. Rivers came. Bob was sitting next to me, and suddenly whispered, "Jenny, mamma is by me ! She has kissed my forehead in her own especial way !"

Turning towards him I saw a beautiful spirit-light, which, however, very soon moved across the table and rested upon Elfie's hand.

"Give me a pencil and paper, mamma," said Elfie. "I know a spirit is wishing to write."

"*How* do you know, dear Elfie ?" asked Mr. Rivers.

"I cannot explain," replied Elfie, "but I *do* know."

Mrs. Clair brought the pencil, and as soon as Elfie took it, her hand began to move rapidly up and down for a few seconds, and then settled quietly to write.

"Hush ! Hush !" she said. "Be quiet."

We waited breathlessly until the writing ceased.

"It is a message from dear Mrs. Rivers," said Elfie, and she read as follows : "Dearest One,—Work is the object of my life here, as it was on earth, but here my every wish is gratified ! Death is not sad ! Rather in truth should it be termed LIFE ! REVIVAL ! . RESURRECTION ! Anything, anything but Death ! It is you, my darlings, who live in death. We here live fully !"

"That answers something I asked my dear wife before I came this evening," said Mr. Rivers, with evident emotion.

"Put some question," said Elfie; "the spirit waits to reply."

"I wish mamma could tell us what sort of place ~~she~~ is living in, papa," said Bob. Immediately Elfie's hand moved rapidly to write: "All the scenery around is most lovely as I sit in my house, which is built of precious stones and pearls, interwoven together with most exquisite flowers and foliage; thus producing a truly heavenly effect. I look out upon scenery which I know not how to describe, because the richest and most varied scenery of the sweetest glen on your earth falls far, far short of what catches my spiritual eye. Your beauties on earth would be increased one hundredfold if the inner spiritual meaning and beauty of all could be discerned. Then in our home, where all is spiritual; where the ~~material~~ is not, but all is pure and spiritual, think, picture to yourself, if you can, what it is! The very hue of the atmosphere is exquisite, and varying. These hues evolve sweet sounds of music; for music is the air and the language of heaven, all attuned in harmony to the name of Jesus, which is the key-note of the heavenly sphere. Our trees are rich and splendid, wreathed and twined about with flowers of richest colours. Fountains arise on every side, the uses of which are to distil nectar for

our refreshment. Living grass and clear running streams of crystal water refresh the eye. Mountains arise in the distance ; mountains on which I love to climb, and to bring you, and Bob, and all of you to climb with me in spirit ! For, my darlings, I have you often with me when in your sleep your spirits come to me. But, whilst you are in the body, it is not for you to discern otherwise than dimly the beauties of our home." When Elsie read this to us Bob exclaimed, "When I dream I am with mamma in a beautiful garden, as I often do, am I *really* with her?" "Yes! Yes, dear Bob," was written largely and rapidly, whilst loud knocks of affirmation, as usual, resounded over the room. Then, again : "Live in faith, and hope. Believe in our power to come to you, by God's permission ; then can we more easily overcome the many difficulties in our way. My house is formed inside of many rooms, and large corridors and halls, all blooming with flowers and rich foliage, bedecked with gems, and pictures of all kinds! And books!—I have my heart's desire of books of every kind! Good night."

"Dear mamma," said Bob, during a pause, "have you been to the place Jenny saw in her dreams? You remember we told you about it when we were at Hastings?"

Rapidly again came the power. "Yes! Yes, my darling, I often visit God's gardens, where His little ones are being trained. They are more lovely than

I can describe. All my precious babes, whose loss we sorrowed over on earth, are here, growing up so happy. Jesus is in their midst, and says now, as He did when on earth, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

I here observed how I should like to know what the children did in the spirit land.

It was written: "Remember that every little spirit born into your world has *business* as soon as ever it is old enough to know of the things of life, which is very soon indeed. The first business is for them to learn to obey cheerfully all the wishes of their parents and guardians; in this way they gain power to govern themselves, and to keep a watch over their little tempers. They should be taught that no child is too small or young to talk to Jesus, and ask Him to help them to be good. Then when they have to go to school, they must try 'to do as they would be done by' to all around, to learn their lessons well, and help their little schoolfellows to do so too. And so in life does daily business arise. 'Be fervent in business, serving the Lord,' is a text for children quite as much as for grown-up people. Well, my darlings, this is *just* the same in the spirit life as on your earth, because all spirits have to be trained to do their duties, to serve God, to love every one around. The children in the spirit land are allowed to go and see their brothers and sisters living on earth, and if they *try* to be good and loving their

spirit brothers and sisters may help them, but God does not let His little spirits be with naughty children; it is the older ones help them then. I ~~must~~ not write more through Elsie now, but if you will lower the lamp I will try to show you some pretty lights."

Said Mrs. Clair, as she rose to subdue the light in the room: "It is really very beautiful how our spirit guides try to show us all—from the smallest child to the old people,—the great importance of life here in every detail. We know well how one unkind, hasty word, so easily uttered, will rankle and wound the mind for an indefinite time! In truth, 'tis not easy to undo the mischief which is done by even one unkind word or look; whereas 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' and a gentle, loving word or smile will fall with soothing power upon the wounded spirit, helping it to rise above the petty trials of daily life."

"Oh, look! look, father!" I exclaimed in delight. A shower of small stars of various glowing colours were floating over the room, resting sometimes on our hands or heads.

"I see such a lovely Spirit," said Elsie; "she is covered with wreaths of flowers! Now she is squeezing a bunch of them in her hand, and scattering the essence over our heads!" and as these words were uttered, the room was filled with delicious perfume, most reviving to us all. A cool breeze,

zephyr-like, fanned our brows ; a soft murmur, as of distant music, fell upon our ears.

Spontaneously, Mrs. Clair began singing, and we all joined in the exquisite inspirational poem given to T. L. Harris :

“ Death is the fading of a cloud,
The breaking of a chain,
The rending of a mortal shroud
We ne'er shall see again !

Death is the conqueror's welcome home,
The Heavenly City's door ;
The entrance of the world to come—
'Tis life for evermore !

Death is the mightier second birth,
The unveiling of the soul ;
'Tis freedom from the chains of earth,
The pilgrim's heavenly goal.

Death is the close of life's alarms,
The watch-light on the shore ;
The clasping in immortal arms
Of loved ones gone before.

Death is the gaining of a crown,
Where saints and angels meet :
The laying of our burden down
At the Deliverer's feet.

Death is a song from seraph lips,
The day-spring from on high ;
The ending of the soul's eclipse,
Its transit to the sky ! ”

Shall I be believed when I declare that whilst we were singing, angel voices clearly joined in with ours? In utter astonishment my father exclaimed, "I hear my sister's voice! Dear Editha's sweet, musical tones, as natural as ever! Surely we are now at the 'Gate of Heaven!' and may well utter the words, 'Oh, death! where is thy sting? Oh, grave! where is thy victory?'"





CHAPTER X.

OUR "LITTLE DEWDROP."

AS the autumn of the year 18— was closing, a great sorrow came to dear Lilly, and to us all.

A lovely little babe was taken to its spirit home very soon after it had been given to us. Lilly's first-born, a bright, lively child, just two years of age, was a fine play-fellow for Bob and me, of course.

How delighted he was when told that a wee sister had been given to him. We had but a glimpse of "Little Dewdrop,"—as our spirit friends named her,—and then she passed away.

At one of our *séances* which took place the following week, we naturally talked about Lilly's disappointment. Mrs. Clair observed how delightful it was to know, that all the little spirits which are thus removed from their earthly home, are but transplanted to "God's garden" to be trained lovingly by older spirits, who, being especially fond of children, are thus in harmony with their sphere.

Said Mr. Rivers, "A very singular and most interesting experience came to my dear wife ~~some~~ **five years** before our Bob was born. Little Annie—~~our~~ **our** baby girl—was very ill, but, as we ~~thought,~~ **thought,** ~~recovering.~~ **recovering.** So satisfied were we of this, that my wife consented to lie down and rest for an hour or two, leaving baby in the care of our faithful nurse.

"I was sitting in my study, which led out from the bed-room in which dear Amy—my wife—was lying. She was just falling into a refreshing sleep, when something aroused her suddenly. On looking up, to her intense surprise she saw a dear friend, who had long passed away, standing by her side, holding our little Annie in her arms, and smiling happily as she looked steadily at my wife. Lifting up her hands in astonishment, dear Amy was about to speak, when a loud voice exclaimed, '*Hasten! her mother will detain her!*' Upon which the spirit turned away and went out at the door, carrying our baby with her. Amy immediately ran in to me, exclaiming, 'May Bright has taken our baby away, dear!' I thought she must be delirious from over anxiety, and was doing my best to calm her when the nursery bell rang violently. We obeyed the summons, and found indeed the casket empty! Our little one had quietly breathed its last *at the very moment* that my wife saw May Bright leave her room with our precious little babe in her arms."

"That is a very beautiful incident," said Mrs. Clair.

"But we must fill in the details, papa," observed Maggie. "They are most wonderful. Mamma and May Bright (whose spirit came to her) had been schoolfellows, greatly attached to each other. May Bright passed away some year or two before mamma was married. One day, when the two girls were talking together about their future lives, May, who was devotedly attached to children, remarked to mamma, 'When you are married, Amy, and have a family, *remember I will come any distance to see you, if at any time you want help with them.*'"

"Very remarkable," observed father, "especially when taken in connection with the appearance of her spirit at the moment your little one was transplanted to its spirit home."

"Did your wife ever see her friend again?" asked Mr. Fisher; "or was this the only time?"

"Our little Annie," replied Mr. Rivers, "was the first of three babes who were successively taken from us in early infancy. But May gave my wife some token of her spirit presence shortly before, or at the time of, the passing away of each of the others."

"Mamma had a dream about May Bright, papa," said Bob; "she told me of it several times, when we used to talk together about dreams, whether they were true or no."

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed Mr. Rivers. "I scarcely remembered that, because it was *only a dream*! But with the light thrown upon such circumstances by our present knowledge of Spiritualism, this so-called dream was no doubt a vision."

"What was it, dear Mr. Rivers?" asked Elfie.

"Well, this dream occurred fully three months before my wife saw May Bright take baby's spirit away," replied Mr. Rivers. "I remember so well what a strangely strong impression it made upon her. On awaking in the morning she said to me, 'My dear, I saw May Bright last night in my dream, so plainly! She was standing by my bedside. As I rose to greet her, she moved away towards the door. I got up; she quickly went out of the room, and ran down stairs; I followed her, calling over the bannisters, "May! dear May, come back!"' She replied, "*I cannot stop now, but I will come again to see you before very long.*"' My wife added, 'It was not in *this* home, but some old-fashioned place—with a *step* leading down from the bedroom door.' Strange to say, within the three months which passed before her spirit friend did come again we removed into the home we now occupy, and which corresponds in all details with the place my wife dreamed of that night, but which she had never then seen."

"I quite hope we shall hear something about little Dewdrop to-night," said Mrs. Clair.

"My hand is all twittering," observed Elfie,

laughing; "it will not keep still. Give me pencil and paper, mamma, dear; 'tis just behind where you are sitting."

So we sat round the table, and in the usual rapid manner received the following beautiful message, purporting to be from dear Mrs. Rivers: "Dewdrop, your fairy darling, is arousing out of her long unconscious slumber, in the loveliest snowdrop blossom you can imagine. Dewdrop of living love! . . . The germ-life will be expanded here, and the refreshment that will thus be given to the union of our spirit and earthly group, will, we hope, prove a stronger bond of union between us all. Another link of love. I, Dewdrop's grandmamma, have her in my especial care, and very precious she is to me. I can but watch over her hourly, and rejoice in knowing it is really true that these little fairies are actually the little ones whom we always thought were lost! We learn here that no germ of life *is* ever lost!

"Is she not well named Dewdrop? for even as a dewdrop did she just rest for a small season in your midst, and then as unconsciously was her spirit germ absorbed back into the spirit sphere from whence it came.

"For the spirit germ is an incarnation from the holy spirit spheres, and whether it is developed in the earth sphere or no, it will always in the end return to the Maker, God, and be with Him, His child. We are, indeed, all God's children. Not one

will be lost, even though ages must go by ere the spirit is purified from all the evil corruptions of earth; the training ends in restoration of the divine germ, cleansed from sin by the life of Christ. Through His power alone can the spirit become fitted for its heavenly home. Ah! my darlings, I see now the beauty of a belief in Spiritualism. I see that it is oftentimes clouded, just as the spirit, pure in itself, becomes begrimed with earthly evil; but the *truth* is beautiful, and to find that I can still be with all I loved on earth is, to me, even a greater joy than I dared to believe possible when I was on earth! I often thought that the teachings of my youth, 'to die and be present with the Lord,' should be enough. But in truth the lesser loves (for the love of God in Christ is the ruling love) maintain, strengthen, build up, as it were, the fuller, truer love. . . . My dear ones, how delightful it was to me to awake to fulness of health and vigour; to find myself in the midst of those whom I had loved on earth! . . . I feel as if I was a child at school! I have seen Jesus! I live in His presence! And I am still unchangeably your loving wife, dear, and the loving mamma to our children." . . . Elsie's hand dropped powerless; the writing ceased.

Our little Dewdrop's arrival in the spirit land seemed to establish a fresh, strong *rapproch* between us and the children's sphere. Most interesting entries I find made in our diaries. Many young

spirits came from time to time, telling us of their joy, describing their lovely home. It was not often they gave any name they had borne on earth; that had passed from their memory. Besides, many had never even breathed in the earth sphere at all. These spirits invariably gave names symbolical of brightness, love, beauty — such as “Sunshine,” “Sunbeam,” “Gladness,” “Snowdrop.” One evening Dewdrop said (writing through Elfie): “I have been playing with little brother Teddy all day. Daisy carried me. I give you all a dear love, and a dear loving kiss. I am sitting on my darling papa’s shoulder! He won’t shake me off. I want to say we are all glad and happy when little children we see on earth are good. When I was with Teddy I tried so hard to whisper loving words! Ah! we cannot say much besides love. We have not much wisdom for you; we left earth too soon.”

“That is a very remarkable message,” said Maggie. “I was with Lilly to-day, and little Teddy came running into the room in great delight, saying, in his pretty childish way, ‘Mamma, who is Daisy? Daisy bring little Dewdrop to love Teddy!’ Now from this message it appears Dewdrop *was* carried by ‘Daisy’ to see Teddy, and the child evidently saw both the spirits. Lilly and I were much puzzled at the time. How delighted she will be to hear this message!”

Mr. Fisher was very much struck with this form of

spirit influence, and observed one evening that he should have thought it would be somewhat detrimental for young, innocent spirits to be thus brought *en rapport* with the earthly sphere? Elfie's hand at once moved, and the following answer was given:—

"No! earth life training is good; and the approaching glorious time of Christ's advent is thus aided. The spirit-germs who can remain in the sphere of those they love, are thereby helped themselves, and I need not say how greatly this helps to bring heaven to earth; to round off the circles of purity. For the communion with the pure in the spirit home must tend to purify these circles on earth, who in a true prayerful spirit keep up this communion permitted by God, opened up by Him!" "Yes! He took a little child and He placed him in the midst of them! So does He now! Now, in the advent of His spiritual reign on earth, does He bring the little ones into your midst, so to help to purify and raise your sphere to theirs, the sphere of purity and of love. So are these little ones the 'sunbeams' from Christ's own sphere. Oh! receive them in His name and be blessed."

Again, in reference to these childish spirits, was given: "They come as a 'gleam of love!' Love that streams from their spiritual Christ's sphere, bearing with it *not only love*, as you suppose! Not only, I mean, childish and child-like love, but it

bears with it an expanding; an *opening up* power to the mediums receptive of this love, which widens their powers of intellect, and will in gradual time bring even a richer, fuller reward than at once presents itself."

I remember how happy it made father to watch the growing interest Mr. Fisher showed in all these various spirit teachings, proving them to be the kind most helpful to his nature.

One Sunday afternoon, when father and I called in to see the Rivers', we found Mr. Fisher and Maggie talking about a sermon which they had heard that morning.

Mr. Fisher was a regular attendant at Mr. Gladwin's church now; for although he was not by any means in full harmony with the theology preached from the pulpit, he (as he told father) enjoyed "the attitude of worship" now he had found a God to love and worship.

Of course father was gladly welcomed, and the conversation resumed, as soon as we had seated ourselves.

Said Mr. Fisher: "How trivial and false has been the greater part of my life, up to within the last year or two. I may, I hope, truly say, *then* I was blind, but *now* I begin to see! But at first these spiritual revealings are overwhelming! The mythical fancies of my childhood, which could only picture such a

heaven as we had figured forth in my father's huge old picture Bible, are exchanged for a full sense of the deep *reality* of a future life ! The little cherubs floating on clouds, blowing trumpets, are replaced by sweetly natural little spirits, like 'Dewdrop,' 'Sunshine,' and hosts of other *workers* in God's great universe."

"The knowledge Spiritualism imparts," observed father, "certainly gives a reality to everything spiritual, which had hitherto been, as you say, mythical and unpleasantly unnatural. I am much impressed, for instance, with the way in which abstractions for which we here can only use words indicating the varied emotions of the spirit, such as love, joy, &c., all become embodied in the spirit world ; fixed, substantial, enduring *facts*, in which we can find rules and motives for work. Thus whilst our *earthly materiality* passes away, and is no more seen, *spiritual substantiality* reigns there for ever."

"Your remarks," observed Mrs. Clair, "are well exemplified throughout the wonderful descriptions of the spirit world which have been given through Elfie. For instance, in a marvellous account of the architecture of the City of Zion, the pavement is spoken of as 'the thought of God ;' this 'thought' being formed, or projected, into all kinds of precious gems, which in their turn reveal spiritual truth to the angel eyes, so that 'they who run may read.' Do we not here find a very literal meaning to the text,

‘ My Word is a Lamp to your path and a Light to your eyes ’ ? ”

“ Certainly,” replied father.

“ Life is a hymn of holy thought,
From God’s paternal mind ;
A soul into His image wrought,
And in His truth enshrined,”

quoted Maggie. “ These words,” she continued,
“ from one of T. L. Harris’s poems, suggest the same
idea, do you not think ? ”





CHAPTER XI.

TEMPUS FUGIT.

"TIME FLIES!" bearing on its wing alike, our sorrows and our joys, our hopes, our fears, successes and our failures. It is said, "small things make up the sum of human existence," and daily do days, weeks, and months pass by whilst nothing of especial note arises to break the monotony of life. Yet then, a trivial incident may prove the germ of some momentous crisis in our life's history; even as an acorn buried in the earth will develop into a large tree.

John and I were talking one day of some such important events which had led on to great results, as we considered them.

John said: "I do think, Jenny, that Spiritualism would never have gained such rapid ground in this country but for your father having been 'read out' of Little Bethel on account of his interest in it,

exactly about the time that Mr. Combishop came to (what he called) 'expose it.' Those two small events have had great results, by bringing the better, higher phases of Spiritualism to the notice of many, who otherwise would have scarcely given a thought to the subject, or only considered it might be, perhaps, a more ingenious description of conjuring."

"Yes, Bob," I replied; "and let us remember that in all probability Mr. Fisher would not have become such a truly religious man as he is now, if he had not happened to go into Little Bethel on that very Sunday. You see, in consequence of hearing father 'read out' he came to see him in the afternoon, and learn about it. This first visit led on to the many conversations upon religious subjects which have been of such great service to him. It was only last week he was saying to father how thankful he was to have been brought to the knowledge of, and belief in, Spiritualism. Mr. Fisher then remarked, 'I can indeed say, with many good men, but for Spiritualism I should never have been a Christian.'"

"'Tis a jolly thing for me," exclaimed Bob, "that Mr. Fisher ever came to our house, and fell in love with Maggie. He is as good a brother as Alfred Rish, isn't he?"

"He *will* be," I replied, laughing; "but you may as well wait till the wedding is over, before you claim him as your brother."

"Ah, well," said Bob, "this day week it will be

over, and Maggie will be Mrs. Fisher. Hoorah! Hoorah!" and in tumultuous joy Bob threw his cap up into the air, when down it fell right into Lovelane Pond, by which we were just then standing.

A shrill, crowing laugh, and a baby voice exclaimed, "Untel Bob's tap in de pond!" and sure enough up toddled little Master Edward Rish, followed by his mamma. The cap was soon hooked out of the water, and we three sat down on the grassy mound under the large old tree, whilst Teddy tumbled about in energetic endeavours to gather all the buttercups which thickly bedecked the meadow.

"If nothing else makes us begin to feel elderly," observed Bob, putting on a very demure expression, "that young Turk must. Don't you think so, Jenny? It's grand to be called uncle."

"Look out for grey hairs," said Lilly, laughing merrily; "and as for Jenny, why, she will probably very soon take to a mob cab and a stick. Positively you must be approaching the venerable age of seventeen years!"

"Don't be so disrespectful to 'Uncle Bob,' Lilly. In eleven months' time Jenny will be seventeen, and I shall attain that age three months sooner."

"I suppose, Bob," I remarked, "you and I were just about the size and age of this wee morsel of humanity when we first met at dear old Mrs. Trainer's infant-school?"

"Yes," replied Lilly; "I remember what a sharp little fellow Bob was; how he used to puzzle us all with his questions. But, indeed, children get strange notions into their little heads. I often wonder how they get there. Do they spring up from *within*—from their inner consciousness—or how do they learn them? Just fancy that young Teddy boy; he cannot speak plainly yet, but this morning he gravely asked me, 'Now God has made me, what will He do with me?'"

"That really sounds very philosophical," said Bob. "What put such a deep idea into his wee head, Lilly?"

"I was in the garden, picking black currants for a pie," answered Lilly; "of course Teddy must come to *help me*, and of course he must, as usual, begin his puzzling questions. First he said: 'Mamma, who made bac turrants?' 'God,' I replied. 'What did Dod make dem of?' 'Skin, pips, juice,' I replied, wisely, for I know 'tis useless to try to escape giving an answer. He waited for a few minutes. Then came, 'Mamma, did Dod mate me?' 'Yes.' 'What did Dod mate me of?' was the next question, and I scarcely know what I said to satisfy his inquiring mind. Anyhow, he very quietly went on eating the currants, and staining his little fingers, mouth, and pinafore in a perfectly marvellous fashion for some minutes. Then all at once he ceased. Turning round, and fixing his great, blue, questioning eyes upon me, he gravely

asked, 'Mamma, now Dod has made me, what will He *do* wid me?'"

"How did you reply?" asked Bob.

"Why," said dear Lilly, "I told him that he was God's little child, given to me to teach to be good. I said he must learn to be very good, and then one day he will go to the spirit-land, and find his little sister 'Dewdrop' waiting for him; and so on; just as I fancied I had fixed his attention, he shouted out, pointing to a little bird which had just then flown past us up into the sky, 'Ook! 'ook! birdie don to ting to Dod in 'pirit'-and! Div Teddy wings! Teddy fie!!'"

"Teddy asked me yesterday," said Bob, "whether if he went to the spirit-land God would give him a box of bricks? I told him *Yes*, if he wanted them; because, when good children go there, they have all they want."

"I expect the little fellow was feeling the loss of his bricks which he had been burning up, mischievously," remarked Lilly, laughing; "his papa told him that, as a punishment for being so naughty, he must not have any more such toys, until he is old enough to know that they are not to be put on the fire."

"Why, that explains his next question!" said Bob, laughing. "I could not see the drift, at all. He whispered to me, 'If Teddy burns his bricks to make pretty blaze will God be very angry?'"

"What did you say to that?" asked Lilly.

"I did not know what to reply, as we must not teach the little ones about God being 'angry' in the sense we use that word here. I just said something about good little spirits always knowing it was not right to spoil any of their playthings; and, of course, if a thing is *not right*, it is not done. Really, 'tis no easy matter to teach the little ones, is it?"

"We must put what we do teach, in terms suited to their small comprehension," replied Lilly; "just in the same way as we are all taught by our spirit-friends. Certainly, when speaking of spiritual matters to young minds (whether young from age, or want of development) it is, happily, not necessary to philosophize over the Law of Correspondence to which Mrs. Clair so often refers. I wish I understood a little more about it."

"What is that you want to understand more about?" suddenly exclaimed a voice behind us. Turning round, there stood Mrs. Clair, whilst Elsie had already seized hold of wee Teddy, and was preparing for one of what she called, her "good romps."

"You certainly were in some very deep conversation," said Mrs. Clair, laughing; "we have watched you as we came across the meadow, and could not attract your attention by any means! But may I ask the subject which involved you all so deeply, and yet, evidently, so joyously?"

We told her about Teddy's infantile wisdom, and how Lilly was just wishing she could learn more of the "doctrine of Correspondence." Bob and I agreed that it must be far too deep for us to comprehend.

"I do not think so, dears," said Mrs. Clair. "Remember there are so many things beyond our finite grasp,—but which will be revealed to us from the development of the inner life, if we just learn the beginning. Let the germ-seeds be planted, water them with *prayerful desire* to know, and in time the truth will surely grow upon us, and within us. I find this remarkably the case in spiritual things; and, beyond a doubt, mediums are frequently taught by the spirits, of subjects far beyond their ordinary powers of comprehension."

"I wish we could all be mediums," said Bob. "Like Elfie now!—*she* only has to take a pencil, and off it flies, giving some beautiful message."

"Both you and Jenny, dear Bob," said Mrs. Clair, "are sensitives. Live prayerfully—*very close* to God; and it may be, as opportunity arises, your desire for mediumship will be granted. But never be *too determined* to gain a power which may prove far from beneficial. With Elfie, it came spontaneously, and could not be resisted. But 'tis not *all* pleasure to be thus sensitive to spiritual influences; for where good can come, so also can evil. And unless mediumship is used as a holy gift from

the Father of spirits, it would prove very hurtful, *physically* as well as *spiritually*."

"I am sorry the Misses Phules and Miss Giggles go into Spiritualism," I said; "they just use the *planchette* and turn tables for fun! I told Julia Phule one day, when she was telling me of very odd things which had happened (proving that there is strong medial power amongst them), that we all looked upon Spiritualism as far too sacred a subject to be played with; that at all our *séances* we begin the evening with prayer, and reading the Bible. I told her all you have said to us, dear Mrs. Clair: that if people play with Spiritualism they will bring around them all kinds of frivolous, lying influences, most hurtful in all ways."

Mrs. Clair looked very sad, and then observed: "It is indeed most deplorable to see what mischief comes, on every side, by Spiritualism (or any other good) being abused, rather than used. Doubtless, our Father *could* have poured out all the good and restrained all evil; but 'tis very evident that the great object of our earth-life training is, to make us choose for ourselves between the two. If we abuse any good, suffering will, of necessity, ensue. Our most precious stones and gems have to be dug out of the earth, sifted carefully from the dross which is mixed with them, and then polished by proper means, before they can shine out in all their true beauty. It is the same with Spiritualism and every

form of truth. Let us never cease our endeavours to sift evil from our spirits, and thus become gradually more and more in harmony with the holy spheres of angel life."

Said Lilly, after a short break in the conversation caused by the pranks of young Teddy and Elfie: "We were speaking about the Laws of Correspondence, dear Mrs. Clair. Is not a knowledge of them necessary, to help us to understand much that is otherwise mystical and incomprehensible in spiritual communications of every kind and degree? To so many minds brought up in the orthodox groove of thought, the Spiritualists' description of our spirit home seems far too material, too earthly. They cannot believe in a 'heaven' corresponding so much with all things on earth. In fact, I find that we, as Spiritualists, have to learn on the outset of our inquiries, that all spirit messages are given to us in language fitted to our narrow comprehension."

"This difficulty arises in all Bible teachings with reference to the future life," replied Mrs. Clair, "quite as much as in Spiritualism; and yet they who bring this charge of a material heaven against us Spiritualists, would repudiate any similar attack, if made upon the scriptural evidences. You know what an admirer I am of Mr. Elihu Rich, that good Swedenborgian and Spiritualist, who passed on after a life of obscurity like so many others have done. I will read you an extract from one of his letters to a

friend, touching upon this very subject. He says: 'Our friend admits that gold and colours are apparent in the other life, even according to the testimony of Scripture! Her difficulty seems to be, that purple velvet is an article of human manufacture. Well, is not "fine linen" equally made by human hands? and yet this is the clothing of the armies of heaven, who followed the Mighty One riding on the white horse. A "sword" too He wore upon His thighs. Crowns were equally given to angels and to glorified saints. There is no limit whatever in Scripture.'

"That is well said," observed Lilly, as Mrs. Clair stopped, "for we read in the Bible, of 'books,' 'rolls of writing' which have 'seals' upon them, candlesticks, &c."

"I don't see how the angels can get their harps," interrupted Bob, "if there is nothing substantial to make them of; besides, walls and gates, to say nothing of mansions or houses, are all such things as we have here, in this world."

"Then the palm-trees," I exclaimed, "and in the last chapter of Revelation we read of a 'street,' a 'river,' and the 'tree of life,' with its 'leaves' for the healing of the nations."

"Mr. Rich writes upon this," continued Mrs. Clair. "Of course no one imagines that the material things thus designated, are in heaven or the world of spirits, any more than they would imagine our material bodies are there. . . . I would say that

things which appear in dreams or visions, or which are spoken of by spiritual intelligences, are the *ideal forms* of things derived from the senses, and that *no communication can be given* but what is expressed in such forms. . . . The *thing itself* which is thus expressed, will be, thank God, very different, very holy, in comparison. What should I care, I, to be told that my lost child is clothed in white lace, and that she wears a starry crown, if I did not know that the one is a symbol of her innocence, and the other of her ready reception of high intelligence?"

"It is such a great pity," said Lilly, "that really the majority of folks are so wilfully ignorant! Take this subject of Spiritualism, for instance: many will be drawn to it, but at the first difficulties which occur, they turn aside, not taking the trouble to *read* upon it at all. And we can never *really* grasp anything intelligently unless we *do* study it."

"There is real truth in the saying, '*a little knowledge is a dangerous thing*,'" remarked Mrs. Clair, "and especially so with regard to Spiritualism."

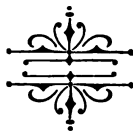
"And yet again," continued Lilly, "however much we learn of this wonderful opening up of Supernal matters, the more we find how grossly ignorant we are. So long as we are in this material body, we can only lie 'on the threshold,' and our glimpses beyond are not more than 'as through a glass darkly.' But it is certainly of the greatest importance for us to do our very uttermost to

learn more and more of this wonderful Law of Correspondence."

Some little time we remained conversing upon different topics, and then walked slowly over the fields homewards. Bob was carrying his wee nephew Teddy, who had fallen fast asleep after his gambols in the meadow.

"Bob," said I in an undertone as I bid him good-bye, "there's to be an anniversary tea meeting at Little Bethel next Monday; don't forget."

"All right," he replied. We both sighed—but why? I must explain that in my next chapter.





CHAPTER XII.

BOB'S DILEMMA.

I AM inclined to think that I ought to head this little record of our early days, "*My Downfall*," or "*Let him who thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!*" instead of "*Bob's Dilemma*." In truth I am not quite sure of the wisdom of relating it at all. I only do so with the hope of its being helpful to any who may read it, by showing to them the exceeding foolishness, as well as wickedness, of yielding to deceit in any form; and how, by doing so, they are quite sure to reap bitter sorrow and misery.

Bob and I had loved each other always, having been inseparable companions from our earliest childhood. But we were growing into years; that is to say, Bob was nearly seventeen years old, and I was but three months his junior. He had grown very much of late, being five feet six inches high, according to the recent measurement marked upon the

lintel of Mr. Rivers' dining-room door. I also was over five feet high ("tall for my age," as mother said), but I do not think, as a rule, girls grow much after sixteen. I had turned up my hair, and been recently promoted to the glory and dignity of a long dress on Sundays. Several times I had overheard mother speak to father about Bob and me, wishing him to prevent our being so much together; and one afternoon, on my return from a delightful ramble over the common with Bob, mother greatly troubled me by saying, in her sharp way, "Now, Jenny, it's no use going on like this. I cannot allow you and Bob to be always trapesing off together. You are both getting too old for such doings."

"I don't think I shall ever feel *too old* to be with Bob, mother," I replied. "Not if I live to be a hundred."

She did not say any more then, being called away. I knew that mother was really very fond of Bob. How could it be otherwise? We had known and loved each other ever since we were at the infant school together. And then he, a chubby little fellow in petticoats, would double up his tiny fists and shake them in the face of any one of the boys who dared to "put upon" me. He would not shake his fist at a little girl; I suppose it was because of a certain native chivalry that always belonged to him; he knew it would be cowardly to do so. But still he had his peculiar method of bringing down the

weight of his wrath, upon offenders of the weaker sex, who ventured to assail me in any way that he thought deserving of resistance. For instance, one day he caught Lydia Giggles making grimaces at me, and trying to deprive me of a stick of butter-scotch. In the struggle between us, it had got into a sticky mass of viscid strings, not much worth contending about; still, it *was* mine, and willing as I was to share any sweets with my friends, I did not choose that Lydia Giggles should obtain forcible possession of my property. I should have got the worst of it, however, had not Bob come to the rescue. Creeping behind her, and seizing hold of the long plait of hair she was so proud of, he tugged away at it unmercifully until, vanquished, she retired into a corner of the schoolroom to howl quietly to herself, and weep her woes away.

Yes! No doubt Bob and I were born *affinities*. In fact, I *know* it now. However, mother knew nothing of "affinities." Probably, looking at things from *her* point of view, she acted wisely in trying to stop our frequent meetings and continual "trapesing," as she called it. But Bob and I, regarding the circumstances from *our* very different point of view, found mother's disapproval a great source of discomfort. What was to be done? To yield to her desire that we should only occasionally walk out together, or perhaps meet but once or twice in two or three weeks? Why, it seemed simply *impossible* for us to

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exist under such depressing, and, so to speak, asphyxiating conditions. After several serious consultations, Bob and I at length concluded that the peculiar circumstances of the case justified us in arranging to meet at times without her knowledge. It was in this way that we argued our own case: it makes mother very cross if she knows how often we meet, and it is sinful in her to be cross. It makes *us* very unhappy and cross too, to have obstacles placed in our way. So three are made cross and therefore sinful, instead of one—a wasteful and profligate expenditure of naughtiness in defeat of lawful pleasure. Because we were sixteen instead of six, there *could* be no possible reason why we should not be together just as much as ever. Certainly we no longer wished to indulge in the frivolities of hop-sotch, marbles, or knuckle-bones, or lolly-pop suction, but we studied together. Bob helped me to learn Latin, and I, in turn, went through all his French exercises and translations with him. Besides which, we learned music together, and unless we met pretty frequently, how could we make any progress in our duets, both vocal and instrumental? So the end of all was that whenever I knew mother was likely to be away from home for any length of time, I took care to inform Bob, upon which he generally happened to walk down the lane behind our garden, about the time I had told him mother would be going out. As soon as he saw my red scart

flying outside my bed-room window, he would vault over the low hedge, and generally managed to rush in at the back garden door, as mother's red plaid shawl upon her shoulders, was disappearing round the end of our road leading towards the town. Mother did not often go out for long together, except on chapel nights. But happily for us, she seldom missed attending the week-day services once, and very often twice, a week. Of course we had several very narrow escapes of discovery before the final *dénouement*. I remember one afternoon mother returned from a shopping expedition a great deal too soon! Most provokingly she had forgotten her purse. Bob and I happened to be picking dead leaves from the plants which stood on the little table placed in the front parlour window, when what should we see but mother's unmistakable red plaid shawl just coming round the corner of the road? And it was upon her own proper shoulders too!

Bob rushed upstairs to the box-room.

From childhood he had sometimes nearly frightened mother out of her wits, (and me too) by climbing out of that window on to the water-butt, and so down into the garden. It was not the first time that he had escaped detection during our late clandestine meetings, by means of the friendly water-butt, so, as he ran off up the stairs, I went out to meet mother, and ask her to come and look at the plants. I wanted to give Bob plenty of time to get

down into the lane and out of sight, before she went up to take off her bonnet.

Just as we were examining mother's favourite "Bride" fuchsia, there *was such a crash!*

We both started and turned towards the door.

"Good gracious!" she cried, "what can that be? who *can* be in the garden? I daresay those tiresome boys of Smith's have been climbing the apple-tree and fallen down! Serve them right, for stealing the fruit!"

And off she started to catch them. But I! Oh! my heart was in my mouth! I *knew* it was Bob: that he must have had a dreadful tumble, perhaps killed himself!

As mother was running off I roused out of my fright, and called out, "I'll go, mother! You sit down and rest. You look so tired."

But no—she *would* go. I followed in fear and trembling, expecting to see Bob lying half dead in the garden! What a relief it was, on reaching the spot no creature was to be seen!

The water-butt was overturned, all the water running over the gravel path, and nearly flooding the scullery.

"Oh! goodness gracious!" cried mother, holding up her hands in dire dismay; "somebody has been climbing up into the box-room! Run for neighbour Robinson, Jenny, directly. Tell him to bring his life-preserver. I dare not go into the house until

some man comes. Oh, dear! dear! and all this beautiful rain-water spilt, and to-morrow washing day."

"Never mind, mother," said I, feeling so brave, "*I'm* not afraid of robbers. Do *you* go to Robinson's, whilst I stand here to see that no one gets downstairs to steal the spoons."

Mother went to fetch our brave neighbour. I did my best to clear the gravel away from the drains, so that the water might run away.

Then came a good search throughout the house, in which I joined, congratulating myself upon Bob's escape, but thinking it was a great pity mother would not allow us to "gallivant" openly together, and so prevent the necessity for such perilous escapes, and disastrous upset of the water-butt. And I was also afraid Bob was hurt.

When father came home, and was told of our adventure, I fancied he looked rather comically at me, and in a few minutes he said, "By the way, Jenny, I met Bob Rivers just as I was leaving the Bank. He was holding his handkerchief to his forehead. I asked him what was the matter, and he said, 'Oh, nothing much, just a scratch! Tell Jenny I'm all right.'"

The first thing in the morning I rushed down to the Library to see how Bob's scratch was. No one was in the room.

"Oh, Bob," said I, "I was terrified to hear you fall! How did it happen? Are you hurt?"

"Hurt—oh dear no!" said he. "I only got th little scratch. The heel of my boot caught th edge of the butt, and knocked *it* over, and down."

"It makes me feel very unhappy to go on decei ing mother like this; I wish it could be avoided said I.

"Yes," replied Bob, "*it is* a bore; let's hope something will turn up soon to alter matters."

Some weeks passed on quietly. Mother persisted in believing that burglars had had something to do with the overturning of the water-butt, and was astonished at my bravery when I assured her before every chapel night, that I had no fear of staying home whilst she went to the service. She agreed with me that it was more desirable than ever, that the place should not be left without some one to keep guard. A large bell was always placed in the passage ready for me to ring loudly at any alarm, and Mr Robinson promised to be on the listen, and to run to the rescue if he should hear it. I need hardly say the bell remained silent.

In the meantime nothing "turned up" to help to discontinue our clandestine meetings.

"Bob," said I, one evening, "this day week grand anniversary tea meeting will take place at Little Bethel. Brother Howler is to preside: he desires all his people to assemble, *without fail*, by five o'clock; and," I said, winding up most triumphant

"mother takes a tray, and is safe to be off soon after three o'clock, returning not until nearly ten !'

"How jolly!" exclaimed Bob; "won't we have a good practice?"

"Yes," I replied; "come very early, and we shall be safe until nearly nine o'clock, as it's father's late night at the Bank."

The day arrived. As I conjectured, mother left soon after our early dinner, being a responsible person, and for the time weighed down beneath the responsibility of providing a sufficient supply of provender of all descriptions, to meet the large requirements of the Little Bethel tea-drinking and bread-and-butter-eating community. I knew exactly all that would take place, having at one time been obliged to join all such assemblies, but, since father had been "read out," mother had quietly yielded the point, and I was left free to accompany him to Mr. Goodman's church. Therefore, to my intense satisfaction, I was no longer a recognised member of the Bethelites.

Bob was with me soon after the clock struck four. All went "merry as the marriage bell" until eight o'clock. Bob and I had just put aside our music, and were settling down to read, when we heard rapid footsteps on the gravel walk, and mother's cough as she gained the front door.

How far better it would have been for us had we

faced our position! Her wrath would have been terrible, but, had we foreseen the misery into which our deceitfulness was about to plunge us, it would have been very far preferable.

"Bob! there's mother!" I exclaimed, starting up like a frightened hare. "Run up quickly to the box-room window."

"Too late," he answered, in an undertone, for mother by this time had opened the front door, and was in the passage, as we expected, on the point of entering the room in which we stood. In an instant Bob had vanished—had dived under the little table which stood in the window, filled with mother's plants. I went out to mother, and found she had gone into the back parlour, and was lying on the sofa, looking very much exhausted.

"Well, Jenny," she said, "I am so dreadfully tired out, standing about, and lifting those heavy tea-urns, I could not stay through the service."

"Hadn't you better go to bed, mother?" I asked, thinking how easily Bob could get off whilst she was undressing.

"No, dear," she replied, "I think I should like a little weak brandy and water, and a biscuit; then I'll lie on the sofa in the best parlour, it's so much more comfortable than this," and, to my intense consternation, she began to get up.

"Oh, mother dear, you look so tired, don't move yet! I'll get you the brandy; and there's such a

draught to-night in the best parlour, you are better where you are."

"Well, perhaps I am at present," she replied, for when she moved she seemed very giddy, and was glad to lie back again directly; "but as for a draught, why, that sofa is much better placed than this one, as far as that goes."

I went into the front room to get the brandy out of the cupboard.

"Lie still, Bob," I whispered. "I'll come and tell you when all is safe for you to get away."

"Be quick, Jenny!" he replied, "it's an awful squeeze!"

And truly it must have been. When we were at the age of six we had many a time sat together under that very table playing. But we found a great difference between six and sixteen now, Bob being over five feet high, and how he at all managed to draw himself up closely enough to get under the little table, has always been a marvel to us both!

I got mother all she wanted, and, shutting her in, was just about to release Bob, when, alas! as ill luck would have it, who should walk in but dear father! I am very sure it's the only time in my life that I have ever been sorry to see his happy face, and felt him decidedly *de trop*! Hanging his hat up on the stand, he went straight into the best parlour and threw himself down in his easy chair. Oh dear! What could I do? Never again, thought I, as long

as I live, will I do a thing I am afraid of acknowledging! Father so often turned his chair round, stretched his legs right under that table, and so sat, looking out at the garden! Supposing he did that now! Very fortunately he did *not* do so, but mother, hearing his voice, came in, and took up her position on the sofa. Evidently both father and mother intended to spend the remainder of the evening in that room.

Bob told me afterwards that he felt almost inclined to crawl out just then, but in the first place he was quite afraid he might terrify mother into a fit; and in the second place, he thought I should get into such a terrible scrape and be most unhappy for a long time. So, inwardly vowing to give up all such deception for the future, he tried to ease his very cramped position, but the table gave such an awful creak that he was forced to keep still—as if struck with catalepsy! We all heard the creak.

“Good gracious, Jenny,” said mother, “the flower-pots are too heavy for that table; it’s breaking!”

“Yes,” said father, getting up and taking hold of the flap; “I’m a great mind to move them, and fetch down that stronger table out of the box-room. It’s not so pretty, but with this cloth over it” (and he held it out, thereby exposing Bob, only I was standing so as to hide him from where mother could see him) “it won’t show. You come and help me, Jenny.”

In desperation I said, "Oh, father! Not to-night, I'm so tired! and it's nearly supper-time. Let me go and lay the supper-cloth directly."

"You can lay it on this table, Jenny," said mother; and I was obliged to submit to the inevitable!

Poor Bob, with his six feet length, was doomed to be cramped up for—oh, surely an indefinite period! Now the only hope for his escape was after all had gone to bed!

"I brought in a nice, fresh crab for supper," said father; "it's on the stand in the passage, Jenny."

I was half wild!—have never liked crabs from that day! Mother was especially fond of that very intricate part called (I believe) "the lady."

"Mother," I said, as father, of course, handed it to her, "won't it make you bad after being so knocked up this evening?" for it always took her an hour to finish her supper when she began picking out the tit-bits of the crab.

"Oh no, Jenny!" she answered. "I'm ready for a good supper; I hardly had a mouthful of anything at tea-time."

A loud crack from the table! Mother started up, went and gently shook it to see if it was broken. It is a comfort she didn't peep under; I can't imagine *why* she didn't. Perhaps it was because I did; and, slipping a large, dry crust into Bob's hand (for I thought perhaps he'd faint for want of food!), I said most positively, "It's all right, mother; it won't

give way to-night. To-morrow I'll bring down the other table."

"We'd better move the plants off after supper," said father, "or they may be broken in the night if the leg gives way any more."

Oh, what an unspeakable comfort when at last supper was over! I persuaded mother to let me clear away after prayer time, instead of before.

Prayers seemed very long that night. The table gave two more creaks, but I think no one noticed them but I. As soon as prayers were finished father went to see to the locking up. To my great relief mother consented to go to bed directly, and leave me to clear away everything. Father insisted upon helping me by carrying out the heaviest tray; then, closing the shutters (which happily shut from the outside), he lighted my candle and waited, expecting me to go up to bed at the same time as he went. And I was obliged to go. I could not make a single excuse for remaining downstairs alone, even for ten minutes. I managed to say to Bob, as father was fastening the front door, "I'll soon come down and undo the door. You might get out when we are upstairs, and sit on a chair." A groan was the only answer.

"Dear me, James!"; said mother, as father went into her room, "we forgot to move the plants."

Father turned round saying, "I'm glad you reminded me; I'll go and see to it."

Here was my opportunity, *if* I could get father to let me go in his place. *If not*, it was all up! Bob would inevitably be discovered, and our confusion would have been fearful.

It is a long lane that has no turning. I felt nearly crazy with fear and the long strain upon my nerves. Why, during those three hours I had passed through a furnace of remorseful misery, and experienced full well that sin brings its own punishment. And Bob also—it was the same with him!

"I'll go, father," said I. Desperately I rushed down stairs and began to move the plants.

"They're too heavy for you, Jenny," called father; but happily mother said, "Let the child alone, James; it won't hurt her for once. Do come to bed; I'm very tired, and want to get to sleep."

So, with a final "good-night" from father, he closed his door. The coast was really clear at last.

I sat down breathless, trembling from head to foot, and was on the point of giving myself up to "a good cry" when my attention was drawn to Bob. Slowly emerging from his hiding-place, he was now lying full-length on the carpet, looking deadly white. I flew to his side, and kneeling down took hold of one of his hands; it was cold as a stone, and the fingers stiff. "Oh, my Bob," I cried, "what is the matter? get up, do!" "I can't stir, Jenny," he said in a very faint voice. "I feel so bad; I think I'm dying!" Indeed, to my inexperienced eye he

looked like it, and I was agonised. "Bob," I said, "you *shan't* die; don't talk like that!" I rubbed his hands; in a few minutes they became warm and limp; he opened his eyes. Suddenly I remembered that once when I felt bad and couldn't move, a long time before, mother had given me a teaspoonful of brandy. Rushing like lightning (but still softly, for I had not forgotten it would be very dreadful if mother and father should hear me and come down!), I poured a little brandy into a spoon, and stooping down by Bob's side, dropped it slowly into his mouth. I shall never forget the horror and intense misery of that hour! It flashed through my mind as I watched him lying speechless and death-like on the floor: "If Bob dies *I* shall have killed him." Then I thought, "I trust *I* shall die too, for what would life be without him?" Oh! that I had told mother and father all, and not kept Bob screwed up so long! It was *that* had done it. It had almost stopped the circulation of the blood, so I believed. I got some cold water next to bathe his head and hands; then, as he revived enough to move round, mixed some brandy and water and made him take it with a biscuit, just as mother did when she felt poorly. It seemed as if hours must have passed before Bob was able to raise himself on to his feet and slowly move about the room. I thought surely the sun will soon rise! But no, the kitchen clock struck twelve just as he said, 'Well, Jenny, I think I can go home

now. If I find the air does not make me all right, no doubt I shall meet with a carriage or cab going to the stables."

"But, Bob!" I said, "won't you be shut out at home?"

"Dear me," said he, "how odd; I had quite forgotten that! I'm afraid they'll be sadly put out about me, as I didn't say I should be late. But I hope they will conclude I have been to supper with Fred Phule, and then I never get home till ever so late; old Mary sits up for me."

"What shall you tell them, Bob?"

"*The truth*, Jenny!" said Bob, "we've had enough of deception, haven't we? This must, I do think, be our last meeting on the sly!"

"Yes, Bob, I think so," I said. "Do you think I ought to tell all to father and mother?"

"I expect it is what we ought to do, Jenny."

We stood together in the shadow of the trellised porch as we said these last few words. No creature was about. The skies were clothed "in the beauty of a million stars." The young moon was slowly rising over the hill by Love-lane, and the song of the nightingale trilled forth from the large tree on our little lawn, where it had built its nest, as Bob and I parted on that eventful night. Locking all up I crept quietly to my room. As I was passing mother's bedroom door I heard her say to father, "Are you awake, James? I fancy I hear some one on the gravel

path in the front garden. I hope there are no burglars about !”

No answer from father, except a long snore.

“Ah, well !” muttered mother, as she seemed to turn round and settle down. “It does not much matter ; I’ve got the spoons under my pillow.”





CHAPTER XIII.

MY CONFESSION.

HOW unhappy I was all that night! The terrible excitement in which our deceit had involved us during that evening had passed off, revealing to me the true guilt of our conduct. Certainly we had always experienced qualms of conscience, often wishing that this temptation had not come upon us! But we allowed our truer, better instincts to be suppressed, and had partaken of forbidden fruit until it had proved itself to be the very apple of Sodom, turning to ashes and bitterness as we attempted to devour it. Years of experience have now taught me that "honesty is the best policy," even looked at from the lowest point of view, that of policy only. I see the great necessity of watchfulness against *little sins*. Let us beware how we deviate in the *slightest degree* from the strict line of honour and truth, for such deviation inevitably

brings its own punishment, ending in misery, and a lowering of the spiritual life within us. Never can I forget the hours of humiliation and bitter remorse I spent that night. The circumstances of my whole life passed before my mind's eyes! I recalled the spiritual experiences of my early days, the life-long training in all things "pure and of good report," the daily influence in which I had lived, of my beloved father's Christ-like character! And I sorrowfully acknowledged that, with such advantages, I ought to have found it simply *impossible* to have given way to deceitfulness—and yet, how had I fallen! Before I slept I made up my mind to confess everything to father and mother. It was a bitter humiliation, a severe punishment, but I felt that no other course was open before me. My confession must be the first step towards expiation of my sin.

I scarcely closed my eyes all that night, going down to breakfast with heavy eyes and a severe headache. Mother and father were much concerned to see my evident illness, and their tender care for me made me feel heart-broken, knowing how I had abused their love. With difficulty I swallowed a slight breakfast. As soon as it was over father went out into the garden to look at some new plants. I followed, feeling it would be easier to open my mind to him alone, first. Alas! until recently no thought had ever been concealed from my beloved father! So deep, so true, was his love for me, that I am

thankful always to look back upon it, and see how truly such love typified the highest form of love given to us in God, the universal Father !

“ Father ! ” I exclaimed, sobbing, as I came up to him, “ I want to tell you something.”

“ Well, Jenny, dear child,” he said, “ I want to know your trouble. It grieves me to see it, and puzzles me too. What can it be ?

“ I have been a very wicked girl, father,” I said with difficulty ; for, what with shame at having such a confession to make, and sorrow for the grief I knew it would cause him, I could scarcely breathe.

“ Sit down, my darling,” he said, as he led me to the little arbour at the end of the garden. Placing himself by my side, he put his arms round me, drew my head on to his shoulder, and, with tears in his dear eyes, begged me to be calm. I could do nothing but weep bitterly for some minutes.

At last I said, “ Father, I don’t think I can ever be really happy again ! ”

“ Do not say so, dear Jenny,” he replied. “ Whatever has happened ?—whatever wrong you have done (and I see it is a consciousness of wrongdoing that is weighing upon you), you have evidently been brought to see the evil and to repent. That is the first step towards overcoming it.”

“ But,” I sobbed, “ you and mother have always been so good to me ! And now I have behaved so

wickedly! Oh dear! how I wish I had never *begun* to deceive you! I am so very unhappy!"

Then gradually I told father all about how Bob and I had been meeting secretly for months, and how he had been placed in such a dilemma the evening before. Father looked very grave and sad, but listened, without interrupting me, until I had quite finished my confession. Then he kissed me, and talked to me in his own dear, loving way.

"Well, my poor child," he remarked, "you are now learning how surely evil brings sorrow. But out of sorrow cometh joy; if, by reason of this fall into temptation, you have learnt the insufficiency of your own strength to resist evil, and the need for daily and hourly praying, 'Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,' then it will prove a life-long lesson to you, and Bob too."

I tried to excuse Bob, by telling father that it was much more my fault than his: that when we first began our clandestine meetings we had no intention of going on long with them.

We must have been talking for more than an hour, when mother came to see what was the matter; for father was usually at the Bank by half-past nine, and the church clock had just struck ten.

Feeling greatly relieved by my conversation with father, I was now pretty calm; but when mother joined us I could not control my feelings, and began again to cry.

"Will *you* tell mother, dear father?" I whispered. "I cannot say any more myself."

Then kissing him, I ran into the house, and threw myself on to the sofa in the back parlour. About half-an-hour later mother came to me. Stroking my hair, she sat by me in an unusually tender and sympathetic manner.

"Mother," I sobbed, "can you forgive me?"

"If God forgives you, Jenny dear, be sure *I* can; do not think any more about it. I am sorry you have been so naughty, but very thankful that you are brought to see the error of your ways. Pray for a change of heart, my child; and take care to resist temptation to do wrong in the future."

Mother was so very good to me all that day. She would not allow me to do anything that would be likely to increase my head-ache, but persuaded me to go out for a stroll over the fields. I met Bob as I was coming home down the lane, and of course told him all. He said he was very glad to find I had confessed our error, and said that he should come up in the evening and talk to father and mother, asking them to forgive us both; which he did.

The next morning, as I was dressing, I heard mother and father talking very earnestly. I could not avoid overhearing part of the conversation, although I closed my door to prevent doing so.

In reply to some remark of father's, during which

he had quoted the text, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath," mother answered,—

"I'm sorry enough I was so stern with the child. You see she's getting a big girl, and I do not want folks to be making remarks about her and Bob being always together, as they really are!"

"Never mind what folks say," said father, "they have never been separated since they were small creatures at school together; 'tis too late to attempt it now."

Then followed some whispering, after which he added, "Their's is a very true attachment; we must leave all these matters in God's hands."

"Well," replied mother, "I certainly will in future; I had no idea they were so set upon being together, or I should not have acted as I did. I am sure I'm fond enough of Bob; he seems like our own child, doesn't he, James?"

I heard no more, and in a short time went down to breakfast.

Mother said to me after father had gone to business, "I have asked father to look in at the Library and ask Bob to come to-morrow afternoon to early tea; 'tis Saturday, so he can come by half-past four o'clock."

"Oh, mother dear, you are good to us!" I exclaimed.

"Then," she added, "I fancy you may like a walk together over Beech-common. I want to send a

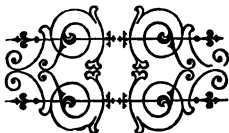
few things to poor old Mrs. Grey ; she is very sadly, of late."

I thanked her.

She added: "You will not go making secret arrangements again, child, I am sure ! You have had a lesson for life, haven't you ?"

"Yes ! indeed we have, mother dear !" I replied ; and, kissing her, I ran away to hide the tears that would still keep rising, and, as mother observed, "were very fleet" for some days to come.

Father and mother forgave me far sooner than I could forgive myself.





CHAPTER XIV.

LOST IN THE SNOW.

THE winter after these events we spent at Eastbourne. Mr. Rivers engaged a pretty little cottage near the sea for the season. Maggie, Bob, and I took up our abode there entirely. In order that our studies might not be interrupted, we took lessons together, of the best masters the place afforded. Mr. Rivers and father frequently came down from Saturday to Monday. But for these visits I scarcely think I could have reconciled myself to so long a stay from my home, although Maggie and Bob were just like brother and sister to me. Alfred and Lilly, with their two darlings, spent a month with us at Christmas. This was rare fun for all, to watch the pretty ways of the children, and listen to their very wise remarks. For the Christmas week father came, and actually persuaded mother to accompany him. It was a very remarkable event for

her to consent to leave our house shut up for a whole week, but so it was, and so it is entered in large letters and red ink in "Our Diary."

But in the midst of our great enjoyment, one circumstance has marked that winter as one of the most important in our lives. Although we daily acknowledge and believe that the angels of the Lord "encamp" around us, it is of course most valuable to have audible and visible proof thereof. *This we received.* It occurred on the 24th of December. Doubtless that is a memorable day to many besides ourselves.

At breakfast time on the morning of that day, father said, "Jenny, I wanted to go and have a chat with Jem Sharp to-day, but find I cannot spare the time. Suppose you and Bob take my place?"

"James," exclaimed mother, "is it safe for the children to go over the hill alone, so far?"

"No fear, Mrs. Greatheart," observed Bob. "Jenny and I have been several times since we came. We do not mind the distance at all."

"I am sure, mother," said I, "I could walk any number of miles over these lovely downs and not get one bit tired."

"Mrs. Greatheart," said Maggie, "they shall start early, taking lunch with them, so as to have a long rest before they need start back. But," she added, turning to us, "get back as soon as you can, and before dark! I want you to help me with my

decorations. We ought to have set to work this morning, but 'tis far too grand a day to remain indoors."

So it was settled. By eleven o'clock off we started upon our expedition, well wrapped up, carrying a basket containing not only our own lunch, but some warm mittens and good Christmas fare for poor old Jem Sharp.

This good man had been a great favourite with us all, ever since we first came to know him at Hastings four years back. Since then his wife had passed away, and so he had come to live with a widowed daughter who resided at Eastdean, a village about four miles from Eastbourne. It was a very lovely walk. Let me recall the scenery which was that day so photographed upon my memory, that it is now as distinctly visible to my "mind's eye" as if I had it still before me. Frost and snow clothed the country on all sides. Sparkling icicles in every fantastic form, hung from the branches of the trees and hedges. The snow-clad hills glistened beneath the bright rays of an unclouded sky. In the distance, across the white-tipped waves of the glorious sea, we could discern Hastings nestling beneath the high, rugged cliffs.

Beyond, scores of small fishing boats were lying out at sea; whilst, close beneath us, were the lovely terraces along the Eastbourne beach, bedecked with the deep green evergreens peeping out from

beneath the weight of snow, and thus forming a most refreshing contrast !

How gloriously the crested waves dashed up the shore ! and the white breakers, all over the ocean as far as eye could see, altogether formed a picture grandly beautiful.

Bob and I did not meet a creature as we walked across the hills. It was nearly one o'clock by the time we reached Jem's cottage.

How delighted he was to see us ! We always had so much to talk over with him ; for, besides all the lovely visions and spiritual experiences which were of such frequent occurrence with him, and about which we never tired of hearing, we were glad to tell him all our thoughts upon such subjects, and to listen to the spiritual interpretation he gave us of matters too mystical for our untutored perceptions. Thus time passed so swiftly that, before we were aware of it, the old cuckoo clock struck three !

Up Bob jumped : " Why, Jenny ! we must run off directly, or we shall be too late to help Maggie ! "

" Well," I replied, " we must get back rather more quickly than we came ; but we can easily do so if we go across the fields, instead of round by the road."

" Ah, my dears," exclaimed Jem, as we stood at the garden gate, " I fear those clouds rising yonder mean more snow ! We shall have a heavy fall before long. Do not attempt the fields, lest you should lose the pathway."

"Not much fear of that, Jem," replied Bob. "I think I should rather like to be out in a snow-storm, it would be rare fun ; we could have a jolly game at snowballing. But now !—let us be off."

So, bidding Jem Sharp and his daughter good-bye, we really took to our heels and ran, until obliged to stop for breath.

"Now, Jenny," said Bob, "what say you ?—Shall we take the road, which lies on our left, or cut across these fields ? Don't they look splendid ? And 'tis by far the shorter way."

"What about the snow, Bob ?" I asked. For, as we stood by the stile, a black cloud suddenly obscured the sun, a few snowflakes fell around, and a low, moaning, whistling wind sprang up, which made me shiver.

"Oh, I wish we were safely at home !" I cried.

"Let's toss up," said Bob ; and, suiting the action to the word, up he threw a penny. "Heads for road ! tails for fields !"

Down it fell.

"Tails !" exclaimed Bob, laughing ; "and I'm jolly glad ! Come along, Jenny ! 'tis not far over here. We'll run again, and get home before the snow-storm comes !"

By the time we had reached the end of the second field, darkness lay around, on every side. Not only had black, angry-looking clouds spread over the sky, but snow was falling rapidly, and dazzling us so that

we could scarcely see one step before us. It was probably at this time that we took a wrong turning. We did not discover our error, however, until, after having wandered about for what seemed an indefinite time, we found ourselves, to all appearance, as far from any human habitation as ever.

And oh! the intense weariness that had crept over us both! The sense of utter loneliness we shall never forget! Still on, and on, we wandered, until at last I stood still.

"Bob," I exclaimed, "I can go no further!"

"Neither can I, Jenny," he replied in a low, subdued tone. "But what will become of us? I can see no cottage,—not even a shed in which we might find shelter for the night."

By this time the storm had passed over. Thousands of stars bedecked the clear, cold sky. The pale, full moon shed a melancholy lustre over the scene upon which we gazed. Silently had the snow spread its pure, white mantle far and wide. A solemn stillness brooded over all, unbroken but for the subdued, distant murmur of the "sad sea waves," and our own voices, as we stood, awe-struck, whilst the knowledge of our perilous position broke fully upon us.

"Oh! Bob! what trouble they must all be in at home about us!"

Here we both gave way utterly. Throwing ourselves upon the ground, we wept long and bitterly.

A sweet, low voice uttered the words, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him—and delivereth them."

Breathless I listened! No creature was near us.

"Bob! Bob!" I exclaimed; "did you hear that voice?"

"Yes, Jenny," he replied quietly. "Yes, I heard it. Was is not dear mamma who spoke? We may be sure she is near to us."

"How strange for us to have so forgotten ourselves," I said. "We will ask our Father to come to us; and, as He sent help in our time of need at Hastings, and is continually watching over us, even in our small, every-day trials, we may be *certain* He will see after us now."

"You see, Jenny," observed Bob, "how very soon any great anxiety, as well as any great joy, does, for the moment, make us forget about our Father and His ministering spirits. For hours we have both been so miserable! And now, when we remember, how different it all seems!"

"And how good and loving of the Father to have reminded us by sending your dear mamma to speak that little word to us! How patient, how long-suffering He is! 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those who fear Him. He remembereth our frames, that we are but dust.'"

And so we spoke to the Father, and then just settled ourselves as well as we could to wait for His answer;

thus to "rest in the Lord," to "wait patiently for Him."

We looked about and soon found a little nook under the hedge, by which we had been standing, where we could be sheltered, and in a measure protected from the snow-drift; which, however, rose far above us as we laid down side by side. I leaned against Bob's shoulder, throwing my large fur cape as much over him as I could, whilst he drew his great-coat across our feet as we crouched closely together for warmth. We were too much exhausted to talk any more. Gradually a sort of stupor crept over us—a dreamy sensation—most delightful, but which would assuredly have soon passed into the sleep from which we could never have been aroused; when suddenly we both started up! I cannot explain why, neither can Bob; we only felt a kind of sharp electric shock, by which we were completely aroused, and compelled to rise to our feet. Can I find words to describe the glorious vision upon which our eyes rested? A small circular cloud of dazzling beauty, formed of every rainbow hue, blending together and intertwining one within the other with exquisite delicacy, stood close before us. Slowly it faded away, and from its midst stood revealed a lovely, angelic female form. Robes of glorious whiteness, shining like satin, fell around her from the shoulders, simply confined at the waist by a broad, pale blue girdle, upon the front of which we

could distinguish the words, "*Ask and ye shall receive*," worked in letters of gold. A halo of glory encircled her head, revealing the heavenly expression upon her face, and the loving eyes which were looking down upon us. We had no thought of fear, but were filled with wonder and delight!

Raising her right hand heavenward in a listening attitude, she said in clear, low tones, "Listen, my darlings, listen! The heavenly hosts are singing! Join with them, and the help you have asked for is even now at hand!" Slowly she faded from our view, and as she did so we both recognised her.

"'Tis mamma," exclaimed Bob! "Mamma, mamma! stay one moment!" but no, her mission was completed; and as we watched her recede from before us, clearly rose upon the silent midnight air, seraphic notes, as of distant music. Gradually, yet swiftly they drew nearer, until we felt that we were in the midst of unseen multitudes, singing in glorious, wonderful harmony.

Joyfully, and indeed involuntarily did we raise our voices with a clearness which surprised us both, but truly strength had been given to us, and all sense of sadness had passed away as we sang that exquisite Christmas Carol:—

"Mortals awake! with angels join
And chant the solemn lay;
Joy, love, and gratitude combine
To hail the auspicious day.

In heaven the rapturous song began,
And sweet seraphic fire
Through all the shining legions ran,
And strung and tuned the lyre.

Swift through the vast expanse it flew,
And loud the echo rolled !
The theme, the song, the joy was new !
'Twas more than heaven could hold !

With joy the chorus we repeat—
Glory to God on high !
Good will and peace are now complete !
Jesus was born to-day."

Scarcely had we finished, when my attention was drawn to some figures which had just come over the hill-top across the fields. They were carrying torches, which flamed up fiercely, scattering a weird light against the horizon. I had scarcely time to draw Bob's attention to them, when across the still, crisp air came voices : "Here we come ; sing again, dear Bob and Jenny ; sing that we may know where you are !"

Truly the help asked for and promised had arrived ! Loudly and again involuntarily did we sing :—

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow !"

and in a very few minutes we found ourselves surrounded by our loved ones, Mr. Rivers and my father, who were accompanied by four men.

I will now relate the circumstances as they happened at home. Maggie was disappointed at our non-arrival by four o'clock, as we had promised, but not at all alarmed. She felt satisfied that we had met with Mr. Rivers and father, who she knew had gone for a walk in the direction we were expected to return. They did not get back until nearly six o'clock, and then all were in the greatest consternation at our continued absence.

Said Mr. Rivers: "This terrible snow-storm is erasing every path! I fear, unless Jem Sharp has detained them, that they have lost their way! and then——"

"Oh, father," exclaimed Maggie in the greatest alarm, "what will become of them in that case? 'Tis dreadful to think of! That road is so lonely. How I trust they may be staying at Jem's cottage! But what time did the snow-storm begin?"

"That is the worst of it," said father gravely. "The day was so bright until soon after three o'clock, that it is not at all likely but what they must have started homewards. I have a hope that they may have returned to Jem, and the only thing we can do is to make the best of our way along the road thither." Father turned towards the door, whilst all the others went out on to the balcony to look over the country.

Maggie and mother were astonished and terrified at the appearance all around. So busy had they

been that they had no idea of the thick snow which had so silently fallen within the last few hours.

"Oh that they had never gone!" exclaimed mother. "No one can live through a night like this, if they are out on the unsheltered hills!"

"The Father can keep them in safety," said Maggie reverently.

"Yes," replied Mr. Rivers, "let us commend them to His loving care. Let us pray that He will send His ministering spirits to guard and protect our darlings, and also lead us into the right direction to find them."

Then they all knelt down. As they rose from their knees my father entered the room. Whilst they had been conversing he had quietly slipped away. Going to the beach he had found four strong men, who had willingly agreed to join in the search for us. Mr. Rivers determined to accompany them.

They arranged to carry with them two garden hammocks; for, as Maggie said, it was not likely we should have strength to walk much, if we really were benighted; and it would be easy for the four men to carry us in the two hammocks.

Mother and Maggie hastily put up refreshments for the party: sandwiches, brandy-and-water, &c.; and then, with heavy hearts, watched them start off in the blinding snow, upon what they feared might be, a fruitless expedition.

The roads were so blocked up, that it seemed

often impossible to proceed; but then, the worse the weather was, the more needful did it become to continue the search. At length, after having wearily made their way up to about the point in the road from whence we had taken the path by the fields, they all stood still consulting as to the best course to be pursued. The snow had ceased to fall, and the clear, cold, moon-lit sky and country looked so desolate that they were well-nigh broken-hearted with grief and terrible anxiety as to our fate.

Suddenly the stillness was broken! From beyond the further field there came, borne upon the air, the sound of our voices singing the carol they knew so well!

"Listen! listen!" exclaimed father. "Those are the children's voices! Surely I am not mistaken?"

"No," said Mr. Rivers, "I can hear both Bob and Jenny singing! God be thanked!"

"Yes, sirs," said one of the men, "them voices are children's voices plainly enough! and they come surely from that corner of the meadow, just over the hill-top."

Without another word they all worked their way in that direction until, to our intense delight and gratitude, they reached the spot in which we had been resting,—little knowing that we had retraced our steps during our long wanderings, until we had at length thrown ourselves down so short a distance from the road which led to Jem's cottage.

Having partaken of some refreshment, of which we stood greatly in need, dear father and Mr. Rivers placed us in the hammocks, wrapping us well up in the rugs they had brought. And so we were taken as quickly as possible home. We felt no ill effect from our long exposure to the bleak, night air; but we have no desire to face such another snow-storm!

Still, the lesson we learnt that night has been of life-long benefit. Although it was not the first time we had found by experience the literal truth of the words, "He giveth His angels charge over thee, to keep thee," the remembrance of these hours have cheered us in the deepest sorrow. And, during days of darkness and dire anxiety, the knowledge that "the angels of the Lord encamp around us" has brought us power to bear up, and unfailing comfort in the assurance that "HE DOETH ALL THINGS WELL."





CHAPTER XV.

MY FIRST OFFER.

“**B**OB! Fred Phule has made me an offer.”
“*Fred Phule made you an offer?*” quoted Bob slowly, and very emphatically. “*Confound the fellow! what could he mean?*”

Bob and I were sitting at the top of the sloping meadow by Love-lane. We had not met for one of our good talks for over a week. In the meantime I had received my first offer. As I told Bob everything, and so far as I can remember, always had done so, of course I told him of this event. I didn't take much notice of the manner in which he received the information at first, for my lap was full of daisies, and I was busy making them into a chain for little Teddy: but when he sprang from my side and began to fidget up and down dreadfully, I raised my head, saying, “What's the matter, Bob?”

"*Con*—found the fellow!" he said.

"What fellow?" I asked, for I declare for the moment I did not understand him.

"Why, that fool Fred!" answered he grumpily. "What business had he to make you an offer, Jenny? What have you done that he should do such a thing?"

Anger is contagious. I began to feel very cross with Bob; in fact, rather piqued. So I answered in the same grumpy way: "I've done nothing wrong, Bob, that I know of. And pray, "I said, tossing up my head very indignantly, "why should Fred be a '*fool*,' because he has made me an offer? Is there anything in me, my looks, or my behaviour to prevent any but a '*fool*' from 'doing so?'"

"He had no business to *think* of such a thing," growled Bob.

"*Why not?*" I persisted. "I'm nearly eighteen. Other girls have offers; and although, until Fred took me by surprise by making me one, I certainly had not thought about it, still I don't see at all," I continued, as my temper rose, "why you should think he's a *fool* because of it!"

Bob didn't answer me. He fidgetted up and down, and I do think I never saw him look so cross and disagreeable in my life before. I quietly went on with my daisy-chain, thinking to myself, why ever is the dear old Bob so grumpy? I wish I had not told him about Fred Phule and his nonsense!

After Bob had fidgetted about some little time, he sat down by my side, took up my daisy-chain, and in an absent way began to pull it to pieces. I took no notice, but thought to myself, Bob shall speak first. It was such a very strange experience for Bob and I to have! Years before we had had our first and only quarrel. We were then playing together in the meadow behind our house, when he threw my beautiful new ball so high, that it fell down amongst the hedges and was lost. It was my favourite ball—one father had given me the week before, on my sixth birthday. I said to Bob: "Oh, Bob, I never *shall* forgive you, and I *never shall love you any more, as long as I live!*" Father gave such a lot of money for my beautiful ball," and I lifted up my voice and wept aloud. Poor Bob was dreadfully disconcerted. "Never mind, Jenny," said he, "I'll save my money—I have a halfpenny a week—and get one just like it."

"But you are not father," I sobbed. "I liked my ball because father gave it me." Bob kissed and petted me, cramming my pocket and mouth too as far as he could with bull's-eyes, and he did at last comfort me, so that I remember I said, "I think, *perhaps*, I shall get to love you again before *very* long, —when I've told father I've lost my ball! I dare say he'll comfort me, he always does." Very soon my tears had ceased to flow, and Bob and I were busy gathering wild flowers to trim our hats with. That

was our first quarrel. Now to think that stupid Fred Phule should cause a second ! I really felt as if I should *hate* him for it ! Well, Bob sat down, as I was saying, and when he had completed the destruction of my daisy-chain, turned round and said in a very subdued tone, "What did Fred Phule say, Jenny ? Tell me all, won't you ?"

"Just what I was going to do," I replied, "only you got so cross."

"Never mind, Jenny, I wasn't cross with *you*."

"It was so unfortunate you were not able to be at their croquet-party last Tuesday. I wouldn't have gone, but expected, of course, to find you there as usual. Fred *would go* home with me, and as we were walking along the field just before we got to our lane, he suddenly stopped by the gate, and asked if I'd sit down a few minutes, he had something to tell me. I didn't want to stay, only as I had a stone in my shoe I thought I would just take it off and get rid of that ; so I sat down."

"Well, what then ?" asked Bob.

"Really, I don't know all that was said, I felt so taken aback. He knelt down by me, and just as I was going to tell him he'd stain the knees of his white trousers with the damp clay, he took my hand and asked me if I liked him. I snatched it away, and said, laughing, 'Pretty well ; why shouldn't I ? We've known one another a long time, and are old friends.' 'But,' he said, 'don't call me a friend, I

want to be something else.' 'Whatever else can you be, Fred?' I said. 'Jenny Greatheart,' he said, quite dramatically, 'is it possible you have not seen how devoted I am to you? My whole soul is yours. My heart, my hand, I give to thee!'

"Ass," muttered Bob.

"You'd have said so if you'd been there, Bob," I replied, laughing; "for, angry as I felt, and horrified lest any one should be peeping at us from behind the hedge, he did strike me as looking so absurd, so dreadfully sentimental, that—I could not help it—I laughed."

Here Bob laughed with me, and began to look more like himself. "But what did you say?" he asked.

"Why, I sprang up quickly, and said, 'Do pray get off your knees, Fred, and don't talk such rubbish. You don't love me like that any more than I love you.' He got up and looked quite angry for an instant, then he went on, 'Jenny, I would lay down my life for you; I vow there's no girl in the county, or in the wide world, to be compared with you, and if you cannot love me my heart will break.' Here he laid his hand over his heart, and sighed so deeply. I began to think, perhaps, I had mistaken him, and spoken too harshly, but really I could not see why he should discourse in this way to me."

"Confound him!" growled Bob, "I should think not. What did the muff say next?"



"Why, he went on to say he thought I must have understood his looks when he was singing that song, 'Love in her eyes sits playing,' during the evening. He declared he sang at me." Oh, how I and Bob roared with laughter.

"Hold my sides," said Bob; "oh, dear! So the love in your eyes had 'shed delicious death!'"

I went on. "Fred certainly never sang with more feeling than he did that evening. I had felt very much amused as he cast his eyes at me, but how *could* I think for one moment that he meant anything especial? I said to him, quite truly—well, of course I was listening attentively—you know, 'Fred, I love music, and you have a good voice, and sang very well'—that was all. I didn't take it to myself in the least. Why should I, any more than when you sing, 'I never saw the girl I loved,' &c.?"

We sat quietly for some minutes, Bob playing with the daisy-chain, or, rather, its remnants; I looking out, over the hills and far away, singing snatches of "I've been roaming." I was always singing, wherever I might be, if I had no especial occupation to hinder me. Mother always said she knew where to find me if I was anywhere near, because of this habit of bursting out suddenly into some wild, glad song. Ah! I had more breath to spare in those days, and the shadows across my path were few and light. Years have passed by; the shadows are longer, and at times have been very

dark. Still, how thankful I am to say that although not often able to "give out my soul in music," as in those days, a low, soft song of hope fills my heart. What if at times the minor tones predominate? Let me not murmur, for I know it is all well, and that a few bars of exquisite minor, sad and mournful though they be, are usually followed by a louder burst of glad melody.

Bob was the first to speak.

"Well, Jenny," he said, "of course I don't wonder at Fred Phule's loving you, or any one else; but it's very odd I've never noticed that he was especially attentive to you."

"No, Bob," I said indignantly, "nor yet anybody else. Fred would never have thought of it himself, if it had not been for that notice in the *Mercury* a few weeks ago about Edward Greatheart's death in Australia. You know it said he died a rich man, and had left his fortune to father."

"By George!" said Bob; "the sharper! So he thought you were to be an heiress, Jenny!" and we laughed merrily.

"Yes, no doubt! things are so ridiculously exaggerated in this town. Edward has left father all he had; but, as father says, by the time all matters are settled there will not be more than £500 left."

"Well," said Bob, "that has been magnified to £5,000! for old Jones said to father yesterday, what a lucky man Mr. Greatheart is to come in for such a

nice windfall! The old chap seems to have forgotten that it is because of the death of his son it has come to him."

"Yes," I answered, "it was a grief to father to hear of Edward's sudden death. I do not remember him myself. You see, he was a big boy when father married mother, and I could not have been more than three or four years old when he and Alfred went away."

"Depend upon it," said Bob, "that ass of a Fred thought he was going to make sure of you and your £5,000! How would he have looked if you had said 'Yes,' and then he had found the £5,000 dwindled to £500? *Serve him right!*"

"Oh, Bob! don't talk like that! Just as if it would ever have been *possible* for me to have said *yes* to Fred Phule; or any one else, in fact! I don't want to be engaged. But I don't *love* Fred,—as I told him;—or any one of the lot."

It was getting late, and the shades of evening were gathering around, The glowing sunset had faded away, leaving only one faint streak of rosy hue along the top of the hill which rose before us in the western horizon. The chill autumn breeze blew somewhat sharply. Drawing my mantle closer around me, we started off homeward at a brisk pace. Just as we turned the corner of Love-lane we saw two figures slowly advancing towards us. So absorbed were they in conversation that it was not until we

were close to them that they looked up. Our eyes met, and exchanging good-nights we passed on. They were Fred Phule and Lydia Giggles !

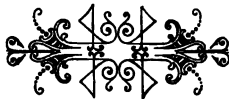
I nudged Bob, saying, "He is very soon consoled, isn't he ?"

Bob muttered an expressive "FOOL !" and no more was said that night until, just as I was close to our garden, he remarked, "I wonder what we should do, Jenny, if we could not have our little talks together ?"

"Do ? Bob !" said I, as I stooped to gather a lovely pink from the flower bed, just inside the hedge which separated our garden from the lane, "we COULDN'T DO ! So it's no use guessing or wondering anything about it."

In a minute I continued, "Here's a lovely pink, Bob ; put it into your button-hole, it's as pure as purity itself can be."

Bob took it quietly, put it into his coat, and, with a "Good-night, Jenny," took to his heels, and in a minute or two was out of sight.





CHAPTER XVI.

LYDIA GIGGLES.

ABOUT a month after I had told Bob of Fred Phule's making me an offer, Lydia Giggles came to call upon me. It was very seldom she did so, and never without some especial reason. She was great in bazaars and such serious vanities; and if any occasion arose for her to need help, to get fancy articles for her stalls, or money for some mission, then she would come. I did not like her any more than I did when we were at school together, and had the contention over my stick of butter-scotch! She had grown up a very stylish-looking girl, always dressed in the very height of fashion, and was now far too polite and lady-like in her exterior behaviour, to make any such open attacks upon the pleasures of those around her, which corresponded to the butter-scotch or bull's-

eye stage of development. But still she was a very frivolous, selfish girl. Like many such individuals, she had had, according to her own account, a great many "love affairs." Whenever we met she talked a great deal about her lovers; all they had said to her; how they had looked, &c., &c. Once I ventured to suggest that it was neither kind nor honourable to give encouragements to any who seemed disposed to bestow especial attention upon her, just for the purpose of laughing at them. She only burst out into a rude laugh, saying she thought it good fun; that no girl was worth anything who could not get half-a-dozen offers before she was twenty. I told father once how she talked, and he said, "Poor thing! she will live to repent her selfish, cruel behaviour. I trust she will never marry at all, until she has learnt the vast difference between such heartless flirtation, and the true, pure love which alone will bring God's blessing on husband and wife."

Well, as I was saying, it was about a month after Bob and I had had our talk together in the Love-lane meadow, when I told him about Fred Phule, and when we had met him walking in Love-lane with Lydia Giggles. The ostensible reason for Lydia's visit to me on this occasion was to persuade me to dress some dolls for her stall at the bazaar. It was being got up to collect funds to help the unemployed poor women in that low neighbourhood lying beyond Close-lane. I told her, father

had an idea that the best thing ladies could do would be to pay these unemployed women to make the things, instead of asking those to do it, who might be more usefully occupied. In a few minutes the bazaar business was finished. Then, as usual, Lydia began about her love affairs, and after a long rigmarole which wearied me beyond expression, and disgusted me too, she suddenly concluded a long tale, of which I had understood nothing, by saying, "Now, Jenny, I'm not going to flirt any more. I've quite fixed at last; and who *do* you think I intend to marry?"

"Oh, dear," I said, "I don't know. I shall never believe you *are* married till I see you leave the church with the wedding ring on."

Mentally I added, "Woe be to the man who takes you for his bride, unless you alter very much for the better."

"Guess!" said Lydia.

"I don't care to guess," I answered, and then I sat silent.

"Suppose I should say Bob Rivers?" said Lydia, looking very slyly at me.

I flew up from my seat and stamped my foot. My cheeks burned with indignation, and as I caught a glimpse of myself in the old-fashioned mirror which was hanging on the opposite wall, I will acknowledge that the image I saw reflected therein, might have passed for some fury!

“Don’t talk of Bob Rivers, Lydia!” I exclaimed. “You *know* you can’t say truthfully that he ever paid you one bit more attention than he pays to all girls. Bob Rivers is a *gentleman*, Lydia! and he has always known you. I’m *quite* sure he is not in love with you!”

“Hoighty, toighty! my man John,” said the *idiot*, as I mentally designated her. “What makes the little dear so *very* sure about her Bob! Is the darling jealous? Does she think I want her one ewe lamb? Does she think I’d run away with the only one who ever looks at her, or pretends to care for her?”

I was in a regular passion, and with great difficulty calmed down at last, sufficiently to say, “You are greatly mistaken, Lydia, in thinking I am jealous! If I know myself at all, I should never care to speak to one of the boys you call your lovers; our tastes would be so very different; and on that account I’m equally sure they would never look at me. We are not likely ever to be rivals.”

“Well,” said Lydia, who was dying to tell me her news, “I was not so sure of that a few weeks ago, but found I was mistaken. And although you have put yourself out so mightily, I will not go away without telling you, for, after all, we are very old friends.”

She paused, waiting for me to encourage her to go on. At last, as I wanted to get rid of her, I said

in a very abrupt and uncivil tone, "Pray, who *is* your favoured swain?"

"Fred Phule!" she exclaimed in a triumphant tone.

"*Fred Phule?*" I repeated, rather amused as I recalled my own interview with him just five weeks ago. "How odd!"

"I was not at all taken by surprise," continued Lydia, with a conscious smirk as she caught her own reflection in the mirror. "He has been very attentive to me for some months. And that evening when we were at the croquet party—you were there, Jenny,—I think you must have noticed it, he was so *very* sweet, and looked at me so expressively when he sang, 'Love in her eyes sits playing,' that I felt *quite sure* he meant something. And when he did make me an offer the next week, oh, Jenny! it was nice! He knelt down, just as we read lovers do in novels, and declared he never had, and never *could*, love any other girl but me. And he said he was sure I must have understood him by his looks, when he sang that song,—you know, Jenny."

Of course this narrative roused my indignation against Fred Phule more than ever; and I felt quite thankful that I had treated him as I did. I found my instincts were true; that his professions of love to me were utterly false, unmeaning, and as such—wicked.

"I expect you envy me, Jenny?" she went on.
"You never had an offer, had you?"

I did not care to answer the pointed question, but I replied, "Father says 'tis no credit for any girls to have offers if they reject them. That is, when, by their behaviour, they have led young men to make them. I never had but one offer, and it was nothing to boast of even then. But do you really love Fred Phule, Lydia, or are you just flirting again?"

"No, Jenny," she said, "I'm not flirting. I'm nearly twenty-one, and I begin to think I should like a grand house and carriage. I mean to be married before Christmas, so that's all about it."

"But, *do you love him, Lydia?*" I persisted.

"Oh—as well as I shall love anyone," she replied. "Between you and me, I did try for the eldest son, because he'll come in for more money when his grandfather dies, and that won't be long. But Fred's very well off, so he'll do. Would you like to be my bridesmaid, Jenny?"

"No, thank you," I replied.

"Ah, well—we'll see—perhaps you'll alter your mind when you remember what a chance you'd have of attracting one of the younger Phules. Such a rich family, with so many sons; it's quite a providence, mother says, that they've all settled down in the town."

Indignantly I replied: "I wouldn't have one of the young Phules if he was worth his weight in gold, so don't talk such nonsense to me, Lydia. I'm happy at home, and don't intend to get married,

and have no wish to attract anyone to make me an offer."

"What about Bob?" she whispered in my ear, and then, without waiting for any reply, she ran down the front garden, and out into the road homeward.





CHAPTER XVII.

BOB AND I SETTLE MATTERS.

“**W**HAT *about Bob?*” said Lydia; and long after she had vanished down the road, these words rang in my ears.

“What about Bob?” came again and again to my mind during the rest of the day. I felt *very* indignant with the whole of the conversation Lydia and I had had together. Somehow, I always felt depressed and unhappy when I had spent any time in her company. I tried to be kind to her, for I pitied her. Her mother was a silly, frivolous woman, who never talked of anything but dress and the varying fashions. Her father—well, I knew next to nothing of him, but had heard my father one day say to mother, “Poor Mr. Giggles! as he sows so will he reap. I should be sorry for our Jenny or, in

fact, for any respectable woman, to be long in his company. He's a low man." When father said, that we were to "love our enemies," somehow—I can hardly say why, (unless it was the remembrance of that early episode, already named, about the butter-scotch)—my thoughts flew to Lydia Giggles, and I *did try* to love her! 'Tis of no use to say I ever succeeded; I did *not*; and the three words hissed into my ear by her, as she left me, "What about Bob?" seemed to have pierced my heart like a hot iron.

And *why* so? Bob and I loved each other with so true and deep a love, that it seemed simply impossible for anything ever to arise to separate us. Of this I was quite sure. And yet, ever since that evening a month ago, some strange, undefinable influence had crept over Bob, which was as a veil between us. I will not call it a cloud, for that gives the idea of sorrow, darkness, and alienation; it was more of a mist, a subtle atmosphere, separating and yet uniting us, if this strange paradoxical condition can be accepted as possible.

We had met often—as usual. Instead of bounding up to my side like a tame mastiff—as I used to say sometimes,—he would be walking demurely, and so buried in thought, that on two or three occasions I had come right up to him before he had seen me. The happy look with which he greeted me was, if possible, brighter than ever. Then, instead of talking

and laughing with me as usual, telling me all the fun, &c., that had been going on at home or in the town, he would sit quietly, scarcely speaking.

One day I said, "Are you tired, Bob—you seem so quiet?"

"No, Jenny," he replied, "I'm not tired, I'm thinking."

"What about?" I asked.

"Several things," he replied; "*you* amongst them."

"I don't choose to be thought of as a thing," I said, jokingly.

Bob laughed, and replied, "Be very sure, Jenny, if you are a 'thing,' you are a very valuable one."

"Oh, of course!" I exclaimed, laughing.

In the afternoon of the day upon which Lydia had told me of her engagement to Fred Phule, Bob and I took a long walk. We went out, over hill and dale, for four miles, to the loveliest spot in the county, called the "Devil's Nest." When we got there we climbed up to a shady little nook we had known from childhood. In it was a picturesque, rough old stone, moss-grown, and embowered on all sides with foliage, and clustering wild flowers. Breathless, and somewhat tired with our walk, we were glad to take up our abode in this shady spot, and rest.

A lovely soft evening in the early summer, the scene rises now before me vividly. The distant

sound of voices from the hay-fields—the trilling notes of the sweet singing-birds—the gentle rustle of the foliage—the air, laden with the fragrance of mown grass as it was lying scattered over the meadows ready for the haymaking.

For some time we sat silently ; then, “Jenny,” said Bob, “I’ve been thinking often of what you told me about Fred Phule.”

“Then, Bob,” I replied, laughing, “I’m sorry you can’t find something better to think about. I feel so angry when I remember it, that I want to forget it.”

“Isn’t it considered an honour for a girl to have an offer?” said Bob.

“An honour?” I replied. “Of course, where a good man makes an offer to a girl because he truly loves her, it is the highest honour he can pay her, and should be accepted as such. But do not speak to me about the ‘honour’ Fred Phule has paid me. It was *an insult*, Bob. Almost before the week had gone, after he had *honoured* me by his false professions of love, he repeated them, *in the same words*, to Lydia Giggles, and they are actually engaged to be married. She told me about it this morning.”

“*By George!*” exclaimed Bob, “I wish them joy ; “but I should be sorry to exchange places with either.”

After a long pause I said, “Bob, the more I think over these things, the more grieved I feel about them.”

"What things?" said Bob, just to set me off talking, as I could see.

"Why," I replied, "these silly, heartless matters called 'love affairs.' Just think of Fred Phule and Lydia Giggles marrying! 'Tis worse than a burlesque upon the grand reality of Love—pure, true love. Father says that as long as these mercenary marriages are entered upon, misery must follow in their train, and untold, far-reaching evil be the result. That he feels sure that if the time ever does come for marriage to be regarded as one of God's most sacred rites, and entered upon only by those who love purely and truly, the influence of evil will be well-nigh over, and God's kingdom will be established on earth, as it is in heaven."

It was now time to be retracing our steps, as mother had especially desired me to be in soon after eight o'clock. We had plenty of time to go leisurely home through the fields.

"Let's see, Jenny," said Bob, after a long saunter, during which he had been plucking blades of grass or wheat, nibbling at them, and throwing them away, "you'll be nineteen next birthday, and I'm just three months older than you are."

"Yes," I said, "in seven months' time I shall be nineteen. I don't feel so old, do you?"

"I've felt older lately, Jenny, than I did at one time." Another pause. Then he continued, "I really think we had better settle matters."

“What matters have we to settle, Bob?”

“Why, Jenny, perhaps some of the other fellows will be making you an offer! It would be very awkward, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes,” I said, “it would, if I had to treat them as I treated Fred Phule; but it’s not in the least likely. I don’t know anyone I should like to live with always. Then we are so happy, Bob; I hope things will go on just as they have been going on. I don’t want to leave home, or to be engaged, or get married, or anything of the sort.”

Again Bob went on silently, until we reached Love-lane.

Then he said, “We *do* love each other, don’t we, Jenny?”

“Of course, Bob. Just like brother and sister; and so we always shall.”

“Yes, Jenny. I’m certain our attachment is real; and as it commenced in our earliest childhood, and is still unaltered, do you not think we may settle matters by being really engaged? Of course we shall go on just as usual for some years, until I can get enough for us to start house-keeping. But if it’s an understood thing that we are to be married some day, you won’t be having any more fellows making you offers.”

“Perhaps it would be as well, Bob,” said I; “it isn’t likely I shall ever love anyone but you, or you love anyone but me. Somehow, I have not thought

of you, ever, except as a brother ; I don't feel old enough to be engaged ! But, if father and mother approve, how happy we shall all be ! ”

We had a great many things to talk over, and were reluctant to bid good-night, although we hoped to meet on the morrow. In fact, we seldom missed a whole day without an interview.

Mother was pleased to see me walk in, a very few minutes past eight. “ There's a good girl,” she said ; “ you are punctual ! And what a colour you have ! your walk hasn't tired you, I can see.”





CHAPTER XVIII.

“WHAT IS TRUE LOVE?”

NO objection arose, either from Mr. Rivers or from my parents, to our engagement. In fact, it was accepted as a most natural condition. We had grown up together from infancy; and, as Mr. Rivers said to father when they were talking over matters, “You see, Mr. Greatheart, your Jenny and my Bob have always been inseparable. If there is such a thing as affinity, surely *they are* affinities!”

“I believe in affinities, most decidedly,” replied father. “I fear comparatively few on earth meet. But where marriage between such does occur, surely we may say ‘it was made in heaven,’ and look for God’s richest blessing to rest upon it? Let us thank our loving Father, Mr. Rivers, that our dear children may look for this blessing.”

“I cannot imagine,” said mother, “what you mean by counterparts and affinities.”

“Why, my dear,” replied father, “’tis a favourite idea amongst a certain class of thinkers, that every child born into the world has its counterpart—or affinity—somewhere. They conjecture that God

creates souls in pairs ; that at birth they become separated, and, until re-united, are incomplete."

"Well ! that's an odd notion !" exclaimed mother.
"I do wonder what folks will think of next ?"

"'Tis singular, anyhow !" observed Mr. Rivers, who never ridiculed any new idea presented before him.

"But suppose the counterparts never *do* meet ?"

"They *must* meet at some time or other ;" replied father ; "if not on earth, they will meet in the spirit-land. Some say they may not even be living on earth at the same time. Each spirit has to pass through a training necessary for its growth and development. When the two affinities meet, their spheres blend magnetically, forming one complete and perfect angel-hood."

"I always thought angels and spirits were the same !" said mother.

"Yes," remarked Mr. Rivers, "the terms are undoubtedly used, interchangeably. But I do not see, that because we have always had a fixed idea upon any especial subject, it is necessarily the true one !"

"A careless, wrong use of terms," said father, "often leads to a great deal of mischief ; and especially, I think, with regard to religious, or spiritual matters. For instance, there are certain words in the Bible misunderstood entirely, and thereby causing confusion and unnecessary misery to many who cling to the notion of its 'verbal inspiration,' as they call it."

"Ah, Mr. Greatheart," said Mr. Rivers, "I want to have a long talk with you upon that very subject some day, but now I must be leaving, or I shall be too late for an important appointment. Adieu."

Bob and I had a most delightful walk that evening, through the cornfields, nearly as far as Beech-common.

"Bob," I said, "I am glad we've 'settled matters!' Somehow, our lives were full of happiness before, but they seem now brighter than ever! Don't you think so? I feel as if I was walking on air, so very joyous!"

"Yes," replied Bob, thoughtfully. "The fact is, Jenny, I suppose it is because the rose-bud of love has now expanded out into full blossom. The budding flower is lovely—always; but the fullest fragrance is not attained until the flower has developed."

"That is a pretty idea, Bob," I replied. "I think you are getting quite poetical!"

"I only wish I *was* a poet," replied Bob. "I do feel as if our lives were so full of love and beauty, that we need most exquisite poetry to give expression to our feelings."

"Well, Bob," I replied, as we sat down to rest on a mossy bank by the road-side, "father says true love is God's grand poem, that is always resounding throughout His universe. That when all lives are attuned in harmony with it, evil will pass away, and perfect joy and happiness reign everywhere."

Silently we sat for some time, drinking in the sweet air, and listening to the soft notes of the birds as they seemed to give out their gladness in trilling music.

"Jenny," said Bob, breaking the silence, "do you remember giving me a flower the night you told me about Fred Phule?"

"I do not remember this especial one, Bob," I replied. "But haven't I often given you flowers?"

"Yes, Jenny, of course you have. I cannot explain how it was that I took such especial notice of this one, but I did! I have pressed it, and shall always keep it in my pocket-book! Look, here it is!"

"Is it wrapped up in cotton wool, Bob?" I asked, laughing, as he took out a large envelope.

"Something better than that," he answered. "I found a pretty little poem in mamma's MS. book of poetry. It was composed by her brother, my uncle, long before we were born, Jenny, but it suited me so exactly that I copied it out, and have put it in with the flower. Just fancy how the 'old, old story of love' is repeated in all lives, and through all ages."

"Do read it, Bob," I said. And he read:—

* "I have gazed on many a flower,
With hues of the rainbow dyed,
Fresh from the dewy shower,
Sweet in the morning hour,
The garden's pride.

* An unpublished poem, by the Rev. Stephen Morell, junr.

" I have marked the red rose blushing
With a delicate crimson hue ;
I have seen the lily flushing
In rills of blue.

" I have watched the petal's gem
Peep forth from the bud, half-blown,
A flowery diadem,
Which, on its deep green stem,
Bent graceful down.

" But not half so sweet appear
Those colours which match the morn,
Nor to me are they half so dear
As *this* flower, all withered and sere,
Its beauties gone.

" Its beauties to *me* still are bright,
And richer and lovelier far,
Than when first it shone in light,
Or drank in the dews of night,
Under Eve's pale star.

" 'Tis my Jenny's holy token,
As pure as pure could be !
And of silent vows unbroken,
Of what lips have never spoken,
It whispers me.

" *She* gave it—but nothing spoke !
Yet silence was speech to me !
Oh ! there's nought which the ties can break,
That link it, for *her* sake,
To memory."

" It is pretty, Bob," I said, when he had done

reading. "But still I'm a little wondering why this one flower should be of such unique value?"

"Because," replied Bob, "I look upon that evening, as the first time that the full consciousness of my love for you was awakened. We have been as very dear brother and sister. But when you told me about your offer, it flashed across me at once—I *could not* lose you. My love must be different from all other! No rival must share, or divide it."

Said I: "In one of the (so-called) Shakespeare plays we read, 'Love sought is good, but given unsought is better.' Now, Bob, our love came into our lives unsought, it is *a part* of our very existence. I never exactly thought of our getting engaged, but I certainly still less thought of our ever being separated in any way. I am quite sure we were born for each other. True affinities—don't you think so, Bob?"

"Yes, Jenny," he answered.

We rose, and walked slowly homewards, saying very little. Bob seemed so thoughtful. As we reached the garden gate, Bob spake.

"Yes, Jenny, as you say, we must be true affinities. May it prove to be TWO SOULS BLENDING INTO ONE ANGEL-HOOD."

THE END.

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